



The Future of Housing for Disabled People

Housing Conference Report

April 2011




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equality • choice • control

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1. Introduction

Background

The Independent Living movement identifies accessible and adapted housing as being one of the basic rights of independent living.¹ Living in suitable accommodation is crucial to our wellbeing and our ability to take advantage of the opportunities that life offers.

In 'Homes Fit for the 21st Century' the Scottish Government states:

“For 2020 our vision is for a housing system which provides an affordable home for all. To achieve this we will need a strong recovery in the construction sector and a substantial increase in the number of homes of all types, including housing to meet the needs of disabled people.”²

This is a considerable challenge, especially considering that the Scottish Government cut its housing and regeneration budget in November 2010 from £448 million to £390.8 million following the UK Government's Comprehensive Spending Review – a 13% cut in funding. Reductions in funding are likely to continue year on year for some time. Alex Neil, Minister for Housing and Communities, estimates that compared with flat budgets in real terms, £42 billion could be taken out of Scottish Government spending over the next 16 years.³

¹ 'An Essential Guide to Independent Living in Scotland': www.ilis.co.uk/uploaded_files/ilis_guide.pdf

² 'Homes Fit for the 21st Century', page 2: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/03132933/0

³ Alex Neil's Fresh Thinking New Ideas presentation: www.housingdiscussion.scotland.gov.uk

Capability and GCIL Research

The Scottish Government demonstrated its commitment to improving housing for disabled people in Scotland by contracting Capability Scotland and the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living (GCIL) to gather evidence about the housing experiences of disabled people through the Housing Voluntary Grant Scheme.

To ensure the widest range of disabled people were given the opportunity to give their views on the housing system, we conducted face to face involvement events and carried out a survey. The survey questionnaire was sent to Capability's 1 in 4 poll panel members, over 500 people who regularly give their opinion on issues affecting disabled people. 151 responses were received and analysed.⁴

From August to October 2010 we ran seven involvement events in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness to hear from disabled people about their housing issues and potential solutions to the housing problems facing disabled people. The events were held in conjunction with disability and specialist organisations (Deaf Connections, Guide Dogs for the Blind Association, Inclusion Scotland, People First, Positive Action in Housing, Scottish Disability Equality Forum and Voices of Experience). Individual reports were produced for each event and a summary report combining all findings.⁵

A total of 134 disabled people attended these events and gave their views on housing for disabled people in Scotland. The groups included people with physical impairments, wheelchair users, people with sensory impairments, people with physical impairments and people with learning difficulties. Several of the events were also attended by people with experience of a range of mental health problems including depression, anxiety, manic depression and head injury. The events also targeted black or minority ethnic disabled people with a range of impairments.

⁴ '1 in 4 Poll Housing Survey': www.capability-scotland.org.uk/housingpartnership.aspx

⁵ All eight reports can be accessed at www.capability-scotland.org.uk/housingpartnership.aspx

The Future of Housing for Disabled People Conference

In order to further explore our findings and agree recommendations for the Scottish Government we held a major conference on Monday 28 February in Edinburgh, which brought disabled people together with housing professionals to identify the way forward.

100 delegates attended the event. Half of the delegates were disabled people with experience of housing issues, including Deaf BSL users, blind people, people with mental health issues, people with communication support needs and people with learning disabilities. The other half of the delegates were housing professionals, including local authority representatives, civil servants, senior figures in housing associations, occupational therapists and representatives from companies specialising in equipment and adaptations.

The conference opened with a keynote address from Mike Foulis, Director of Strategy and Performance at the Scottish Government. Mike set the scene for the day, detailing the main findings from the 'Fresh Thinking, New Ideas' discussion in relation to independent living and the future strategic direction under 'Homes Fit for the 21st Century'. Elspeth Molony, Senior Policy and Consultancy Manager at Capability then gave a 'state of the nation' report based on the results from the survey and the involvement events. Grant Carson, Director of Housing and Employment Services at GCIL, completed the presentations with the operational view from Scotland's largest disabled persons' housing service. Copies of the speaker's slides can be viewed on the Capability Scotland website⁶.

The remainder of the day consisted of workshops looking at the key themes from the research. This report provides the context for each workshop, a narrative of the discussions and makes recommendations for the Scottish Government.

⁶ www.capability-scotland.org.uk/housingconference_1.aspx

2. Executive Summary

The Scottish Government demonstrated its commitment to improving housing for disabled people in Scotland by contracting Capability Scotland and the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living (GCIL) to gather evidence about the housing experiences of disabled people through the Housing Voluntary Grant Scheme. Following an extensive period of research and involvement, Capability and GCIL held a major conference on Monday 28 February in Edinburgh, which brought disabled people together with housing professionals to identify the way forward.

The conference discussions identified a number of practical recommendations for the Scottish Government, which are detailed in this report. The three main recommendations are that the Scottish Government should:

- Encourage local authorities to set targets for the building of new accessible housing in order to substantially increase the stock of accessible housing by 2020.
- Consider the extent to which funding proposals for innovative projects to tackle the housing crisis will deal with the issues raised in this report when assessing applications.
- Consider funding a national housing advice and advocacy service for disabled people, which would function as a one-stop-shop for all housing and disability issues.

The key recommendations from each set of workshops are:

Equipment and Adaptations

1. Professionals involved in Shared Assessments must listen to the opinions and preferences of disabled people and ensure that the provision of equipment and adaptations is person-centred.
2. The Scottish Government should consider adopting a centralised approach for equipment and adaptations, learning from the successful New Zealand model⁷.
3. Local authorities should use the planning system to encourage the development of physically accessible housing and set targets for accessible new build housing.

The Social Rented Sector

1. Social housing should be built to clear and uniform minimum standards of physical accessibility so that it is cheaper and easier to adapt in the future.
2. Work should be undertaken to balance the requirement to manage voids with the allocation of accessible and adapted housing to the right people.
3. Housing providers should develop innovative partnerships to increase the availability of accessible houses for disabled people.

Communication and Information

1. Agencies involved in housing must do more to provide accessible information about disabled peoples' housing options.
2. Staff in housing agencies should have policies in relation to accessible information and communication and source training in this area.

⁷ For more information on the New Zealand model see Appendix 1

3. The Scottish Government should consider funding a national advice and advocacy service for disabled people in relation to housing.

Community and Location

1. Disabled people should be involved from the early stages of planning to ensure that the requirements of disabled people can be taken into account.
2. Housing providers and the police should work in partnership to take swift and effective action to deal with the perpetrators of anti-social behavior.
3. Housing suitable for disabled people should be in mixed communities with good local amenities and transport links.

Private Sector Housing

1. Action must be taken to ensure that home ownership remains a viable option for disabled people despite the cuts in welfare benefits, including Support for Mortgage Interest⁸.
2. More should be done to raise awareness amongst disabled people and housing advice providers regarding the schemes available to support home ownership.
3. Effective advocacy and advice must be available for disabled people looking to exercise their right to adapt a rented home and/or the commonly owned parts of their home.

⁸ Support for Mortgage Interest (SMI) is a benefit that can be claimed by certain homeowners claiming Income Support, income-based Job Seekers Allowance, income-related Employment Support Allowance or pension credit. It is used to contribute towards mortgage interest payments.

3. Findings

3.1 Equipment and Adaptations

Context

In 'Homes Fit for the 21st Century' the Scottish Government states that everyone in Scotland should have:

“A warm and comfortable home, whether they own it, part-own it, rent it privately, or rent from a social landlord.”⁹

For many disabled people there is a crucial additional element to a home being warm and comfortable – the home must be physically accessible. Without access, comfort is a remote aspiration. The majority of housing in Scotland was built before 1965¹⁰ when accessibility was not a recognised priority. Therefore for many disabled people, improving access to their homes requires equipment and adaptations. However it is clear that the provision of equipment and adaptations is failing disabled people. The Scottish Household Condition Survey estimates that there are 71,000 homes requiring adaptations in Scotland¹¹ and that one in five disabled people or people with long-term health problems who require an adapted house live in a house that is 'not at all' or 'not very suitable' to their needs.¹²

Issues surrounding equipment and adaptations featured strongly in all seven involvement events in 2010. Participants at our events felt that there is not enough communication with disabled people about what they need to live independently and too much rigidity in what can be provided.

⁹ Homes Fit for the 21st Century', page 2:www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/03132933/0

¹⁰ Scottish Household Conditions Survey: www.shcs.gov.uk

¹¹ Scottish Household Conditions Survey: www.shcs.gov.uk

¹² Scottish Household Conditions Survey: www.shcs.gov.uk

We heard time and time again that people are rarely asked about what their needs are, which often results in money being wasted on aids and adaptations that do not suit people's requirements.

Waiting times were also a big issue, with many participants reporting that they had struggled to get even essential adaptations carried out within a reasonable timescale. As a result of inadequate provision of equipment and adaptations many participants felt that they were not able to participate fully in home life and that they were forced to rely on assistance and support from others.

Workshop Discussions

There were 9 main areas of discussion during the workshop sessions:

Issue 1: The system for the provision of equipment and adaptations should be simplified and made uniform across local authority areas.

Disabled delegates reported that they found the process of applying for equipment and adaptations to be overly complicated and that there is a postcode lottery meaning that what people can get differs depending on where they live.

The services of Care and Repair were commended by both disabled delegates and housing professionals in making the system simpler for disabled homeowners. Care and Repair has offices across the Scotland, which are largely funded by local authorities. They offer a range of services which help older people and people with disabilities to continue living independently, including advice and assistance to help homeowners repair, improve or adapt their homes so that they can live in comfort and safety in their own community.

However, although the model of advice, guidance and assistance operated by Care and Repair and the personalised approach taken, was commended by disabled delegates who had used the service, the services are only available to home owners and private tenants. Disabled delegates who live in social rented housing said that they also need a one-stop-shop for advice and assistance in relation to equipment and adaptations.

The Ability Equipment Service¹³ operated by Scottish Borders Council was highlighted as a good model of a one-stop-shop. They provide a range of equipment to disabled and older people across the Borders in all tenures. They have a wide range of equipment available on loan to people who are assessed as needing them and also order one-off pieces of equipment for people. The Ability Equipment Service also has a demonstration area where people can try out equipment and get advice and assistance and a mobile exhibition service that tours the Borders giving information and showing equipment.

However, although this was commended as a great service, it also serves to highlight the postcode lottery as many local authority areas do not offer such services. It is for this reason that delegates called for a national approach to adaptations services, albeit with face to face services delivered at a local level. This would provide a common access route and uniform charging across Scotland.

It was also suggested that a passport system could be implemented so that people's assessed needs could be recognised from one local authority to another.

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www.scotborders.gov.uk/life/livingandsocialcare/careandsupport/communitycare/communitycareservice/4883.html

Issue 2: The process for the provision of equipment and adaptations should be improved by increasing communication between disabled people and occupational therapists.

Delegates felt that there is not enough communication between occupational therapists and disabled people with regards to their needs and requirements.

Although this is recognised in the Scottish Government's Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations,¹⁴ our research and the experiences of disabled delegates at the conference, would suggest that this is not filtering down to ground level.

There was a strong feeling amongst disabled delegates that occupational therapists did not listen to their requirements and that more emphasis should be placed on what the person needs in order to live independently. Disabled delegates shared experiences of being forced to take equipment that they cannot use due to poor understanding of what the disabled person wants. This left people feeling like they have no empowerment or choice.

It was also felt that there should be more communication between occupational therapists, local authorities and contractors who fit adaptations and better monitoring to ensure that the solution implemented is effective.

Delegates were particularly frustrated when they had previously had equipment that worked well for them but their occupational therapist had changed the system without talking to them about it. A Deaf delegate told the group about being given a new door bell system where the bell flashes but when the batteries die there is no signal to let you know that they need to be changed. Another Deaf delegate said:

¹⁴ 'Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations': www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/publications/CC2009_05.pdf

“In my old house the doorbell was a flashing light and I never had any problems with that. I moved on to the pager system and I had problems with that and I would forget it in my pocket. People would think I was not answering the door. I feel that the flashing light system was the best system of all. I wish we could get that back.”

An occupational therapist explained that they often do not have enough money to give people what they want. She said:

“What you offer somebody can sometimes be something that you know is not the best. But 90% of the time you don’t have the funding to offer the best equipment.”

Delegates agreed that if communication was improved between all involved – the occupational therapist, the disabled person, and contractors who fit the equipment or adaptations – then money would be saved because the right equipment/adaptations would be implemented and mistakes could be avoided.

Disabled delegates also spoke passionately about the need to recognise that one size does not fit all when it comes to equipment and adaptations. Everybody’s needs and requirements are different and therefore communication regarding solutions is vital. A family member who cares for a disabled person highlighted this with regards to the sink that had been installed in her kitchen. It was at an appropriate height for the wheelchair user but caused her back problems. The need for individual requirements to be understood was also felt strongly by disabled people living with non-disabled family members as they wanted their family members’ needs to be considered too.

Issue 3: The Scottish Government should consider adopting a centrally funded and managed system for equipment and adaptations.

One of the delegates referred to the system for equipment and adaptations that operates in New Zealand and suggested that a similar system could work well for Scotland¹⁵. It was felt that a centralised model might help to simplify the process of getting equipment and adaptations, making it easier to understand. It would also overcome the problem of having a postcode lottery and make communications and record keeping much more efficient.

There are strong similarities between Scotland and New Zealand – similar populations, the same proportion of disabled people (1 in 5), both countries have highly populated urban areas and sparsely populated and isolated rural areas and both are island countries. However Scotland is much smaller than New Zealand, and we don't have the logistical difficulty of being spread over two main islands, therefore it could potentially be easier to operate a central system in Scotland.

Issue 4: Registered Social Landlords should not remove adaptations from social housing.

Disabled delegates expressed frustration at the Registered Social Landlord practice of removing adaptations from houses and allocating them to non-disabled people. Delegates felt that this was a real waste of money and resources.

Delegates understood that local authorities cannot leave social housing without a tenant for any length of time. However it was felt that instead of removing adaptations, a better system should be put in place for matching disabled people with suitable adapted housing.

¹⁵ For more information on aids and adaptations in New Zealand see Appendix 1

Local authority representatives admitted that in some cases they do not know how many adapted properties they have. It was suggested that local authorities should compile lists of all adapted houses with details of the adaptations and have Occupational Therapists assess properties and match them to individuals.

Inclusion Scotland, one of the disability-led organisations that hosted an involvement event with Capability, reported in ‘Homes for Life? – Freedom of Information research into accessible homes for disabled people in Scotland’ that in the four years preceding the Freedom of Information request in 2009 that:

“As much as £2.5 million may have been spent in removing adaptations by the 32 Scottish local authorities over the last four years.”¹⁶

Therefore not only is the practice of removing adaptations frustrating for disabled people but it is also a huge expense for local authorities. Implementing a policy of not removing adaptations from social housing is a key area in which savings can be made by local authorities. An alternative would be to follow the New Zealand model and implement a robust process for recycling and reusing adaptations.

Issue 5: The Scottish Government should continue to support the Scottish Accessible Housing Register.

Delegates felt that the Scottish Accessible Housing Register being developed by GCIL and Ownership Options will help match vacant adapted properties to people who need them quickly and efficiently. It was also felt that the system will help disabled people find housing which meets their needs across local authority boundaries and therefore cut down on waiting times. It should also enable local authorities to match disabled people to suitable housing and reduce the practice of adapted housing being allocated to non-disabled people.

¹⁶ ‘Homes for Life? – Freedom of Information research into accessible homes for disabled people in Scotland’, page 15: www.inclusionScotland.org

Issue 6: Funding should be provided so as to realise the Scottish Government's vision for Scotland to be recognised as a world leader in integrating telecare alongside more traditional housing support.

This vision is set out in Homes Fit for the 21st Century. However, a housing professional working in telecare said:

“Telecare is all about supporting people from home. That’s what people want – to be safe in their own homes. However funding is reducing and it forces us to look at things differently.”

There were also some concerns expressed by disabled people in relation to telecare. One delegate felt that it would invade their personal space, one that confidential information would not be safe, and another said that she did not like the idea of not being able to have face to face conversations with her GP. It is therefore clear that disabled people will require reassurances in relation to telecare and that some may not want to engage with it.

Issue 7: Professionals involved in the Shared Assessment process should promote the use of Self Directed Support for the purchasing of equipment and temporary adaptations.

People who receive Self-directed Support are able to purchase and manage for themselves some or all of the care they have been assessed as needing. This includes equipment and temporary adaptations that would be otherwise provided by social services. However, in 2010 only 1% of all packages of Self-directed Support were for equipment and temporary adaptations.¹⁷

¹⁷ 'Self-directed Support (Direct Payments), Scotland, 2010': www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/09/27093422/0

Empowering people to choose their own equipment would increase flexibility, choice and control, especially as people have the option to top up the funding provided with personal finances. This would ultimately increase their ability to live independently which could in turn decrease the level of funding required for care.

This is recognised in the Scottish Government's 'Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations' published in December 2009:

“As part of the shared assessment process the use of self-directed support should be discussed with the user and carer... It is an opportunity to meet the assessed needs of the whole person in creative and flexible ways and to enable them to achieve their own desired outcomes.”¹⁸

However, although this is recommended good practice in the Scottish Government guidance, it again does not seem to have filtered down to ground level.

Issue 8: The planning system should be used in order to increase the rate of building of new accessible houses.

Delegates called for all 32 local authorities to follow Glasgow City Council's lead in using the planning system to encourage the development of accessible housing. For all private developments of more than 20 homes in Glasgow, at least ten per cent must be wheelchair-accessible. This would significantly contribute to the Scottish Government's goal of increasing the proportion of accessible housing available.¹⁹

¹⁸ Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations': www.sehd.scot.nhs.uk/publications/CC2009_05.pdf

¹⁹ Homes Fit for the 21st Century', page 25: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/03132933/0

Issue 9: Money saving opportunities should be explored in relation to economies of scale and shared contracts across local authorities and housing associations.

Delegates felt that local authorities could save money on the purchase of equipment by working together in the procurement process so that larger orders could be placed, which would drive down per-item costs. Collaboration allows economies of scale and the sharing of good practice and expertise. This could enable local authorities explore more innovative approaches and equipment together.

Key Recommendations

1. Professionals involved in shared assessments should be adequately trained in effective communication and understanding the needs of disabled people. This should be ensured through integrating training on disability awareness and effective communication into relevant college courses and through continuing professional development. This will help ensure that professionals take a person centred approach to the provision of equipment.
2. The Scottish Government should consider adopting a centralised approach for equipment and adaptations, learning from the successful New Zealand model.
3. Local authorities should use the planning system to encourage the development of accessible housing and set targets for accessible new build housing.

3.2 The Social Rented Sector

Context

The recent economic downturn has shown the importance of social housing in providing a secure and sustainable alternative to home ownership with over 596,000 households across Scotland living in social housing as at 31 March 2010.²⁰

The Scottish Government recognises this in 'Homes Fit for the 21st Century':

"We recognise the vital role of social housing in providing people with an affordable home and a platform for getting on in life"²¹

The social housing sector is particularly important for disabled people and their families because disabled people are over-represented in the social housing sector. However, there remains a significant shortfall in the supply of suitable housing for disabled people in Scotland. This fundamentally disadvantages disabled people and the people who support them, and prevents disabled people from leading healthy, independent and economically productive lives.

The Scottish Household Condition Survey found in 2009 that 52% of disabled people live in their own home and 48% in rented accommodation, compared to 69% and 31% respectively for non-disabled people.²²

Many of the disabled people who attended our involvement events, particularly people with mental ill health at the VoX event, stated that they were happy in social rented housing and that the prospect of home ownership was stressful. Our 1 in 4 Poll also found that tenants in social housing felt that their needs were more likely to be met by social landlords than in other forms of housing.

²⁰ Housing Statistics for Scotland: www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Housing-Regeneration/HSfS/KeyInfoTables

²¹ 'Homes Fit for the 21st Century', page 4: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/03132933/0

²² Scottish Household Conditions Survey: www.shcs.gov.uk

However in many cases social rented housing fails to meet disabled peoples' needs. The lack of accessible stock, combined with allocations policies which are perceived to be unfair, has resulted in disabled people often failing to find suitable accommodation and living in completely unacceptable conditions.

Workshop Discussions

There were 6 main areas of discussion during the workshop sessions:

Issue 1: The Scottish Government should continue to support innovative solutions in the social rented sector.

The Scottish Government made it clear in 'Homes Fit for the 21st Century' that there is a need for radical solutions to the housing problems we face in Scotland:

"We will implement a radically different and innovative approach. Across Scotland, we have seen new ideas emerging on how this can be done, from councils, housing associations, developers and investors... We welcome them all, and intend to pilot as many new methods as possible. Some require no Government support, while others can proceed only if there is financial or other input from Government. We will assess each proposal on its merits."²³

A good example of an innovative approach highlighted in the workshop by a housing professional was the partnership approach being taken by in East Lothian in order to build more housing. In October 2009 East Lothian Council agreed a £25m loan facility for East Lothian Housing Association (ELHA). This enabled ELHA to benefit from the lower rate of interest that the Council is able to access from the UK Treasury.

²³ 'Homes Fit for the 21st Century', page 7: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/03132933/0

Another example of innovation shared was the Highland Council practice of encouraging private landlords to lease properties to social landlords to avoid property remaining void. This is an effective way to increase the supply of affordable housing and to provide private landlords with a secure income stream.

Issue 2: The Scottish Government should highlight the negative impact Housing Benefit reform will have in Scotland to the UK Government.

Disabled delegates expressed real concern about the UK Government's planned reforms to Housing Benefit. Delegates were worried that the changes will result in disabled people not being able to pay their rent and that this could result in increased poverty and in some cases homelessness.

The Scottish Government stated their disagreement with the UK Government proposals in 'Homes Fit for the 21st Century':

"Although many details of their proposals are yet to be made clear, the initial proposals are unfair and will narrow tenants' choices. It is neither fair nor effective, during a prolonged economic downturn, to deduct 10% of Housing Benefit from social tenants who are long-term unemployed and claim Job Seekers Allowance. The likely consequences of these plans will be higher rent arrears and more evictions, rather than improved employment prospects."²⁴

Delegates at the conference called for the Scottish Government to use their influence and lobby the UK Government to reconsider the Housing Benefit reforms and recognise the disproportionate impact they could have on disabled people. Disabled people face multiple barriers to employment, not least attitudinal and institutional barriers. Disabled people make an average of two and a half times as many job applications as non-disabled people and yet get fewer job offers.²⁵ Therefore any detriment as a result of being long-term unemployed will have a disproportionate effect on disabled people compared to non-disabled people.

²⁴ 'Homes Fit for the 21st Century', page 34: www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/02/03132933/0

²⁵ Scope Report 'Ready, Willing and Disabled': www.scope.org.uk/help-and-information/publications/ready-willing-and-disabled?style=hide

Issue 3: Registered Social Landlords often do not give enough priority to disabled peoples' housing needs compared to other groups.

Disabled delegates expressed frustration at long waiting times for suitable housing in the social housing sector. A delegate with a learning disability said:

“I waited two years to get mainstream housing. Homeless people and people who have children always get priority. I know a case of someone in East Lothian who pretended to have children in order to get priority. People with learning disabilities end up in accommodation for people with learning disabilities and want to move to new accommodation but can't because they don't have priority.”

The perception that disabled people's needs are not given sufficient priority could be in part a result of housing providers not doing enough to communicate their allocations policies to prospective tenants and the fact that they are often not available in alternative formats or easy read. This issue is referred to in the Scottish Government's draft Social Housing Allocations Practice Guide:

“Priority on health or disability grounds is an area where it is extremely important that you manage applicants' expectations. You need to make sure that you convey the message, to applicants as well as health professionals, that it is not having a particular health condition or disability that will give them priority for a house but whether a new house will improve the condition or make it easier to live with.”²⁶

This emphasis on making sure disabled applicants understand the allocations policy and that their expectations are properly managed is not included in the recently published Social Housing Allocations Practice Guide²⁷.

²⁶ www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/08/05104504/7

²⁷ www.scotland.gov.uk/allocations

This could be a missed opportunity given that many disabled delegates at the conference did not understand the allocations policies of the housing providers they were in contact with.

Delegates discussed whether disabled people in unsuitable inaccessible accommodation should present as homeless so as to get priority. It was recognised that this is a risky strategy and not to be recommended. However it was felt that it is important to record the number of people living in unsuitable homes.

Issue 4: Social housing should be built to a ‘Lifetime Homes’ standard so that it can be adapted at a later date more cheaply and easily.

Delegates felt that social housing should all be built to the Lifetime Homes standard of accessibility²⁸. One delegate said:

“We need to start at the beginning and have homes for life rather than standard houses and then occupational therapy and social work input. We need to build houses for life, not for disabled people. If people have high dependency needs then they may need extra adaptations, but we need to build for everyone.”

This was supported up by an Occupational Therapist who said that the design of houses impacted on the cost of adaptations, such as the design of stairs impacting on the cost of stairlifts. She said:

“Houses should be for people for life. We need to plan for life.”

²⁸ www.lifetimehomes.org.uk

Issue 5: The management of voids should not result in accessible housing being allocated to non-disabled people.

Minimising voids (housing without a tenant) to help meet housing need and reduce the loss of income they cause are important aspects of the current performance framework for social landlords. The management of voids feature in both the Performance Standards published by the Scottish Housing Regulator and in Audit Scotland's performance indicators. However, the pressure on housing providers to re-let empty houses within a tight timescale can result in accessible and adapted accommodation being let to people who do not require access. Delegates agreed that Registered Social Landlords need the opportunity to leave a property vacant for a short time to find a person whose needs would be met by the home's adaptations.

Issue 6: The reduction in housing association grant, and focus on building the maximum number of social housing units, means that homes are still not being designed for a future, more disabled generation.

There is concern that social landlords are failing to address the immediate and ever increasing demand for physically accessible homes. It was felt that economic pressures were leading landlords to focus solely on the number of new homes built, rather than the quality or physical accessibility of those homes. There was concern that this would lead to massive problems for disabled people and higher costs for landlords in the future.

Key Recommendations

1. Social housing should be built to a minimum standard of accessibility so that it is cheaper and easier to adapt in the future.
2. Work should be undertaken to balance the requirement to manage voids with the allocation of accessible and adapted housing to the right people.
3. The Scottish Government should make incentives available to encourage local authority and registered social landlords to build more physically accessible homes. This would help to ensure that less emphasis is placed on the number of units built and more emphasis is placed on the quality and physical accessibility of new homes.

3.3 Communication and Information

Context

Effective communication and accessible information is crucially important to the provision of suitable housing services for disabled people. The Scottish Accessible Information Forum, which is funded by the Scottish Government, states that:

“As well as a legal responsibility, public bodies have a social responsibility to include disabled people and must ensure that the information and services they provide are accessible to all. Within this context providing accessible information has an important role to play, since information about goods and services which do not consider the impact on disabled people may result in them being excluded from those services.”²⁹

²⁹ ‘Public Service Providers and Accessible Information: An investigation into the challenges and needs of public service providers’, Scottish Accessible Information Forum, August 2009: www.saifscotland.org.uk

The lack of information about disabled peoples' rights and options in relation to housing was a key theme at our involvement events in 2010. The general issues raised by participants regarding the lack of information about housing options were felt even more strongly by people with information access requirements, particularly visually impaired people and people whose first language was not English, including people whose first language was British Sign Language.

The involvement events uncovered a continued failure on the part of housing providers to communicate clearly with current and potential disabled tenants. Formats such as large print, Easy Read, Braille and audio are not widely available.

Communication barriers also remain a big issue. At the event held in conjunction with Deaf Connections, which was attended by 17 Deaf BSL users, many people told of their frustrations with inaccessible forms of communication being used such as telephones, letters and emails, and a lack of provision of BSL interpreters.

The lack of effort on the part of some housing professionals to understand disabled people and their needs was also a key theme at the People First event with people with learning disabilities. One participant stated:

“People don't listen to me. They're not interested in my wellbeing”.

There is a need for much greater involvement and consultation with disabled people about their housing needs.

Workshop Discussions

There were 4 main areas of discussion during the workshop sessions:

Issue 1: There is not enough accessible information about disabled peoples' housing rights and options.

Participants felt that there is a confusing array of options available to people in relation to housing and not enough accessible information for people to make sense of the options. A senior figure in a housing association stated:

“It is important to get information to people at the right time. That way you avoid mismatching people and accommodation.”

Delegates agreed with this, with another housing professional adding:

“Information is there but it is not always accessible or in the best format. Maybe we should be looking at DVDs where we can put subtitles etc. That makes it easier.”

Several housing professionals stated that working with a single allocations policy in their area had simplified things greatly - both for them and also for disabled people. They said that disabled people just had to complete a single application form. As these forms can be long and complicated, only having to complete the form once, and only having to request alternative formats once, is a great improvement.

Delegates also called for communication and information to be delivered in a timely manner. It is essential that disabled people receive accessible information promptly on request so as not to miss out on opportunities and to have enough time to digest the information and to have support to understand it if necessary.

It is also important that the right information is provided and made accessible. One housing professional said:

“I work with our newsletter and leaflets. But it is difficult to know that we are providing the right information. Users should give us some idea what they want.”

The workshop highlighted a general need for public bodies and social landlords to perform much better in providing accessible information and advice. This issue might be addressed through the inclusion of an outcome or indicator relating to clear and accessible information in the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The Charter is currently being developed by the Scottish Government and its implementation will be overseen by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Issue 2: Housing Health Checks could benefit disabled people if the help and advice was appropriate and provided by people who understand disabled people’s housing needs.

In ‘Homes Fit for the 21st Century’ the Scottish Government sets out proposals for ‘housing health checks’ for people on housing lists and long term tenants who want to look at their options. There was general agreement in the workshops that ensuring that disabled people have access to expert information and advice about the different options open to them was a positive proposal. However one housing professional stated:

“If you are going to have a discussion about housing options, remember that housing options are limited. People would get their hopes raised and then dashed. When a house comes up it is unlikely that a person will get a house in the area that they want. We have people waiting and waiting, particularly people who need larger houses.”

Issue 3: Housing providers and local authorities need to communicate more effectively with their tenants and future tenants.

Disabled delegates and housing professionals all agreed in the importance of effective communication. One housing professional said:

“I think it is important to be able to go and see a person and discuss what their needs are.”

Delegates agreed that face to face communication is often the best form of communication for both parties. However some delegates, especially those living and working in rural areas, felt that it was not always practical to speak to people in person about their issues. Others felt that face to face communication could also be poor if not delivered in the right manner. For example one disabled participant said:

“In my case a housing officer came to my door and said 'we have a house available for you' and I asked when I had to move. He said '5 o'clock'.”

Being given just a few hours to move would be an incredibly stressful experience for anyone and for some disabled people it would be even more stressful.

All delegates agreed that it was important to back up verbal communication with accessible information. This is especially important for people who find it difficult to absorb information verbally, particularly in stressful situations, which can be the case for people with mental ill health. Therefore professionals should not assume that face to face or verbal communication is enough on its own.

Some disabled delegates felt that housing professionals do not listen to them. One delegate stated:

“It shouldn’t be about what they want - it is about what I want. I don't want to move out of my house. I think this is one of the biggest communication problems. They dictate. They all need a lesson in listening.”

A senior figure in a housing association said:

“We do a tenant satisfaction survey and we always ask the question about the method of communication that people prefer. The tenant newsletter seems to be the most popular way to communicate. We also get a lot of information through about other organisations which we are now including in the tenant newsletter.”

Housing professionals and disabled delegates all agreed that people working in housing agencies need training in order to be able to communicate effectively with people, particularly people with hearing impairments and learning disabilities.

Issue 4: There is a need for a national advocacy and advice service for disabled people’s housing issues that has local groups with local knowledge and local workers.

Disabled delegates felt that there is a need for a national advocacy service for disabled people experiencing housing issues, which could function as a one-stop-shop for all housing issues for disabled people. One delegate said:

“Could I suggest that there be a central clearinghouse which could signpost people to the right place? I'm thinking something like NHS 24 - a central number would be a good idea.”

While it was agreed that having a central place to contact would be beneficial, delegates were keen that the one-stop-shop also understood local issues. A participant who lives in the Highlands said:

“The further away from home a service is, the harder it is to have them understand your needs.”

It was also felt that people living in rural areas could be disadvantaged if face to face meetings were not possible. In addition, Deaf people who do not use the telephone could be disadvantaged. However a Deaf delegate suggested a way round this:

“Maybe the advice line could provide a webcam service instead of necessarily meeting face to face. You could have a webcam chat with an interpreter.”

Key Recommendations

1. Agencies involved in housing must do more to provide accessible information about disabled peoples' housing options.
2. Staff in housing agencies should have policies in relation to accessible information and communication and source training in this area.
3. The Scottish Government should consider funding a national advice and advocacy service for disabled people in relation to housing.

3.4 Community and Location

Context

When we asked people in the involvement events and in the 1 in 4 poll about what makes a house a home, issues of community and location came up time and time again. The location of a home was identified as being just as important as its size or design. Participants valued having a sense of community and close proximity to friends, family and amenities, and having good neighbours. The issue of hate crime and harassment was also raised, as was the need for safe, secure and well maintained public spaces.

The Scottish Government recognises the importance of community for all of Scotland's citizens:

“The Scottish Government believes that everyone has the right to be safe and feel safe in their communities. That is why we are committed to creating and supporting safer and stronger communities - where we live, work and play - in which we all take responsibility for our actions and how they affect others.”³⁰

However, our research found that disabled people face distinct issues that may not always be factored into community planning. A participant at the Deaf Connections event who lives in a less desirable part of Glasgow said:

“It is risky for me coming home, as I might not hear someone following me”.

At the Capability launch event participants agreed that the location of the property was of great importance, not just the accessibility of the house itself. One participant said:

“When applying to a housing association there is absolutely no guarantee that you'll be offered a house in the location that you want it. This makes it really difficult when you have a network of support around you and you really don't want to move away from it but at the same time still want your own home”.

At the VoX event we heard about a woman who is bipolar who was allocated a house in a cul-de-sac. As a result of her condition, she feels that all her neighbours are constantly looking at her house and therefore living in a cul-de-sac increases her feelings of paranoia. It would be better for her mental health if she lived at the end of a row of houses. The group felt that there was a lack of understanding of mental ill health amongst housing professionals and that mental health problems should be taken into account in allocations policies.

³⁰ www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Justice/public-safety/17141

Workshop Discussions

There were 5 main areas of discussion during the workshop sessions:

Issue 1: Community planning should recognise the importance of social housing being located close to amenities and transport links.

Participants expressed frustration that there is not enough 'joined-up' thinking when social housing is being planned. The end result of this is often housing that lacks good transport links and essential local amenities. Good public transport links are vital for many disabled people, especially people who do not have cars, in many cases because their impairment prevents them from being able to drive or due to the high costs of running a car. Without good public transport links people can be isolated from the wider community and less able to participate in society. Isolation was raised as a particular issue for people with mental health issues whose wellbeing could be detrimentally affected by isolation. Therefore it was felt that ensuring accessible transport links should be central to social housing planning and given a higher priority

As well as good transport infrastructure, participants also highlighted the need for buses and trains to be accessible. One delegate talked of his frustration at always having to plan every trip in advance because the transport system is not fully accessible and special provision has to be made:

“Transport needs to be accessible. You can't get on a train in a wheelchair without giving at least 24 hours notice as there's no-one to provide ramps.”

Issue 2: Disabled people should be involved in community planning from the early stages of the process.

Disabled delegates felt that not enough was done to involve disabled people in the planning process. It was felt that if there was more consultation and involvement with disabled people at an early stage in the planning process many of the practical

issues could be discussed and anticipated. This would then result in housing and communities that better met the needs of the people. Disabled delegates who had been involved in community planning said that it was only ever in the later stages of the process after key decisions had been made. It was felt that this was not genuine involvement but rather just a box-ticking exercise.

Delegates who had been involved in the planning process also expressed frustration at the lack of feedback regarding the impact of their involvement. This led to some people feeling that their input had not had any effect. One delegate said:

“You’ve got to communicate with relevant groups. But there’s no point in involving folk and not listening.”

It was also felt that planning departments should do more to advertise their social housing plans and the opportunities for people to be involved in the process. Delegates felt that planning departments should send information to local disability groups and post information in community centres.

Issue 3: There are difficulties in commissioning and building good-quality social housing.

Delegates had a wide-ranging discussion about how social housing is commissioned and developed. A key point was around the practical difficulties in encouraging private companies to commit and invest in developing social housing. Many felt that there should be more incentives to encourage innovative designs and interest from private companies, particularly during the current economic downturn. It was felt that there may be a role for government and local authorities in making the prospect of investing in social housing more attractive to developers.

Issue 4: More should be done to make communities safer for disabled people, especially in areas of social housing.

Delegates felt that social housing is too often located in areas dominated by anti-social behaviour. Disabled delegates felt that many disabled people feel more vulnerable than other people because of their impairments, particularly people with sensory impairments who cannot hear or see approaching danger. It was felt that this was not sufficiently taken into account in the planning process or in allocations policies.

Delegates felt that with proper planning, and involvement of disabled people in the process, community safety could be improved by including plenty of well-lit areas, ensuring that disabled people are not housed in areas close to locations where young people often congregate, or in areas close to pubs. One delegate said:

“There are five or six pubs round my area. I stay on the corner. I hear arguing and shouting and fighting. It’s not a good idea to house disabled people near lots of pubs.”

It was also felt that the planning process should ensure there are things for young people to do, such as youth clubs and sports facilities because then young people would be less likely to gather in the street, which many people find intimidating.

Delegates also expressed frustration about the lack of action taken to eradicate the anti social behavior they experienced. The end result was often that people who were affected by anti-social behaviour ended up moving elsewhere in desperation.

It was felt that the systems for dealing with anti-social behaviour should be simplified to allow different agencies such as police and housing associations to work together more effectively and to deliver quicker results. It was suggested that Councils and Housing Associations should move towards short-term assured tenancies as it is easier to address anti-social behaviour with short-term assured tenancies. However, other people felt that it was important to keep long-term

assured tenancies because once disabled people find the right house in the right place they do not want to then have to move.

Issue 5: The planning process should ensure that there is a good mix of housing, tenures and people living in a community.

A mixed community is a neighbourhood where a broad social mix of households all live side by side, including people of differing ages, ethnicities, incomes, family sizes and disabled and non-disabled people. Housing in mixed communities is of mixed tenure, where private and social rented housing sits alongside owner-occupied homes. Delegates felt that this approach is a vast improvement from the planning attitudes of the past, when social rented housing was concentrated in large estates.

Delegates felt strongly that disabled people should be able to live in mixed communities alongside non-disabled people. Disabled delegates expressed unhappiness with housing which grouped disabled together away from non-disabled people. This “ghetto-isation” of disabled people was felt to be outdated and to be a contributing factor in the prevalence of stereotypes and prejudices towards disabled people.

Key Recommendations

1. Disabled people should be involved from the early stages of planning to ensure that the requirements of disabled people can be taken into account.
2. Housing providers and the police should work in partnership to take swift and effective action to deal with the perpetrators of anti-social behavior.
3. Housing suitable for disabled people should be in mixed communities with good local amenities and transport links.

3.5 Private Sector Housing

Context

In Homes Fit for the 21st Century the Scottish Government recognises that:

“Home ownership is the largest tenure in Scotland today and remains the aspiration of the majority.”

However, the 2009 Scottish Household Survey found that:

“Owner occupier households (28%) and those who rent from the private sector (19%) are less likely to contain someone with long-standing health problems or disabilities than those living in the social rented sector (51%) or other tenure types.”³¹

This was mirrored in our 1 in 4 Poll report, which found that half the respondents owned their own home, well below the Scottish average for home ownership, which is two thirds³².

We found in our involvement events that disabled people feel that while some of the problems getting a mortgage were also experienced by non-disabled people, there are added barriers for disabled people. One participant said:

“I went to my local bank and asked about a mortgage. The guy there said ‘why do you want information on a mortgage, you’re disabled’, as though I couldn’t afford one.”

A participant at the Capability launch event, who has Cerebral Palsy and a speech impairment, has recently bought his first home. He told Capability about his experience with financial advisers from different companies repeatedly putting the phone down on him because they did not understand him. He also told me about

³¹ Scottish Household Survey 2009: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/16002>

³² Scottish Household Survey 2009: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/16002>

being frustrated at not being able to search for properties according to accessibility features, such as level access, despite this information being available in the Home Report.

Disabled people at our events also said that part of the difficulty in buying your own home is that it can take a long time to find one that is suitable, accessible and close to networks of support. One participant reported that it took her eight years to find a suitable house to buy.

Renting privately was seen as a good option by some participants at our involvement events, who felt that private rented accommodation could be found in better areas than social rented accommodation. However some participants, particularly at the VoX event with people with mental ill health, felt that renting privately did not have enough security as the landlord could issue notice to quit at any time.

Workshop Discussions

We would like to extend our thanks to Fraser Gilmore, Housing Options Broker at Ownership Options in Scotland, for his expert facilitation of the Private Sector Housing Workshops.

There were 5 main areas of discussion during the workshop sessions:

Issue 1: The Local Authority Scheme of Assistance is failing to meet the needs of disabled home owners.

Delegates felt that the Scheme of Assistance, which was introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 to offer advice and help to people who need to carry out repair and improvement work to their homes, is not meeting the needs of disabled home owners. Delegates stated that not enough was done by local authorities to make people aware of the new scheme and those that had tried to access support through the scheme spoke of dissatisfaction.

Participants spoke of a disconnect between what disabled people want and need in order to live independently compared with what they were told they could have by their local authority through the scheme. Participants echoed what had been said in the aids and adaptations workshop about the options available to them in many cases meeting their functional need but not style aspirations. One participant said:

“We’re talking about peoples’ homes - they should be able to have as much choice as everyone else.”

Many participants felt that occupational therapists do not listen to their preferences. Many people also said that they were embarrassed with how their new kitchens and bathrooms look after adaptations are made. There was a general feeling that many adaptations are more suitable for a care home rather than a person’s own home. It was agreed that there is a stigma in having adaptations and that this affected the resale value of people’s homes.

Participants felt that there is a postcode lottery with regards the length of time it takes for Scheme of Assistance applications to be processed. One disabled participant said she was still waiting for a suitable bathroom after four years.

There was also a feeling amongst participants that adaptations made through the Scheme of Assistance are not always good value for money. One delegate said that she had obtained a quote for adaptations to her bathroom and that the work would total £2,000. However the local authority said that it was necessary to use one of their approved contactors and that the work would total £10,000. This participant was left feeling that contractors were “in cahoots” with the local authority and that the pool of potential contractors should be widened so as to create more competition for work, which would drive down prices.

Issue 2: Schemes to open up home ownership are not working effectively enough for disabled people.

Home ownership schemes such as LIFT (Low Cost Initiative for First Time Buyers) Open Market, LIFT New Supply, Lift New Supply New developers Trial and Access Ownership, which are designed to make home ownership more accessible, are failing disabled people. Delegates felt that in many cases the schemes consider disabled people only as a second thought.

Delegates also felt that not enough was done to advertise the schemes. This is demonstrated by the fact that many of the disabled delegates had not heard about them. This also suggests that professionals working in advice and information provision are not doing enough to highlight the options to disabled people.

Ownership Options in Scotland³³ was commended for their work in promoting the schemes to disabled people. Ownership Options helps disabled people to resolve their housing issues, by working on finding tailored solutions for individuals. However the Registered Social Landlords who operate the schemes need to do more to advertise them rather than rely on specialist advice providers like Ownership Options.

The lack of information and guidance about the opportunities can lead to disabled people missing out on them altogether. An example was given in this area in relation to LIFT. Delegates stated that it had been very popular when it first came out and by the time many disabled people had heard of it, the first tranche of funding had gone.

There was a call for more accessible information about the different schemes and for people to think 'outside the box' in disseminating the information to reach as many people as possible.

³³ www.ownershipoptions.org.uk

Issue 3: Disabled people experience multiple barriers to accessing mortgage lending.

Delegates agreed with the participants in our research that disabled people face multiple barriers to accessing mortgages. In some cases the barriers are in communication and information – confusing forms, too much information to wade through, too many complicated words, confusing variations in lending policies – and in other cases they are attitudinal, with lenders making assumptions about disabled people based on prejudices and stereotypes. A lack of understanding in the lending market means that disabled people are often ignored and refused. Insufficient effort is being made to make communication and information accessible through the use of alternative medias such as accessible websites and easy read information packs.

There was a call for a heightened understanding of disabled peoples' requirements and the barriers that they face, along with a greater awareness of disabled peoples' rights under the Equality Act 2010.

Issue 4: The reduction in Support for Mortgage Interest has had a devastating and long term effect on many disabled peoples' ability to own their own home.

Delegates in the workshops were highly concerned about the spiralling poverty that many disabled people are now facing as a result of the economic downturn, the heightening unemployment rate and the proposed cuts to welfare benefits.

The reduction in Support for Mortgage Interest also plays a key role here. In October 2010 the amount of interest that people on means tested benefits could claim to pay their mortgages was cut from 6.08% to a level equal to the Bank of England's monthly Average Mortgage Rate, which is around 3%. This new figure does not cover the total mortgage payment for many disabled people, meaning that disabled people have to find the difference themselves or face having their homes taken away from them. Not only could the impact of this be devastating for disabled people who currently own their own home, but it is also likely to greatly reduce the

number of disabled people for whom home ownership is a potential option. This then has a knock on effect on the number of disabled people seeking homes in other tenures.

Delegates in the workshops shared their experiences of having had to give up their homes as they could no longer afford their mortgage repayments. Putting people at risk of homelessness is likely to cost the Scottish Government and local authorities considerably more in the long run.

Issue 5: The Right to Adapt Common Parts should be implemented with high quality advice and guidance for home owners.

As set out in the Scottish Government's Right to Adapt Common Parts in Scotland consultation:

"The Scottish Government is consulting on regulations which will give disabled people the right to make adaptations to common parts of the building they live in. Common parts are those parts of a building that are not owned by any one person, like the stairs or the front door in a block of flats. At the moment, disabled people can only have adaptations made to common parts if everybody who owns a share of the common parts gives permission. The Scottish Government is proposing that other owners will not be able to withhold their permission unreasonably. This should make it easier for disabled people to get adaptations made to common parts of their building."³⁴

The civil servant responsible for the consultation at the Scottish Government attended both Private Sector Housing workshops to hear peoples' views on the proposals firsthand.

³⁴ www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/336980/0110421.pdf

Delegates were enthusiastic about the proposals. It was felt to be crucial for people living in homes with shared areas that the shared areas could be made accessible, not just the person's home. In some cases it could be necessary in order to access one's home at all.

However there was concern in the workshops that the practical implementation of the new right would be fraught with difficulties. Concerns included the difficulty in securing agreement from all parties, the potential for disputes between neighbours who could not agree, the implications of taking legal action against an opposing neighbour and the potential for the required adaptation to devalue the property and the lack of willingness of all parties to share in the cost of maintenance.

Participants said that these concerns might put them off requesting an adaptation to a common area because they want to live happily next to their neighbours. One delegate also highlighted that it could lead to an increase in disability hate crime because some people might be unwilling to live beside disabled people if they had to contribute to the maintenance of a stair lift for example.

Neighbour dispute resolution services should be primed to provide advice in this area and to promote the importance of accessible housing in the private sector.

Key Recommendations

1. Action must be taken to ensure that home ownership remains a viable option for disabled people despite the cuts in benefits and in Support for Mortgage Interest.
2. More should be done to raise awareness amongst disabled people and housing advice providers regarding the schemes available to support home ownership.
3. Effective advocacy and advice must be available for disabled people looking to exercise their right to adapt common parts.

4. Conclusion

By bringing together disabled people and housing professionals in the first conference of its kind in Scotland, Capability Scotland and the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living have successfully captured the key housing issues facing disabled people in Scotland today. The workshop discussions identified a number of practical recommendations for the Scottish Government – recommendations made by the people who experience the issues and the professionals who deliver the services at ground level.

The three main recommendations for the Scottish Government are:

- Encourage local authorities to set targets for the building of new accessible housing in order to substantially increase the stock of accessible housing by 2020.
- Consider the extent to which funding proposals for innovative projects to tackle the housing crisis will deal with the issues raised in this report when assessing applications.
- Consider funding a national housing advice and advocacy service for disabled people, which would function as a one-stop-shop for all housing and disability issues.

It is also essential that in putting these recommendations into practice, the Scottish Government understands the term disability in its widest sense, including in its considerations not only individuals with physical impairments, but also those with mental health issues, sensory and cognitive impairments and learning difficulties.

Capability Scotland and the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living look forward to working with the Scottish Government in our role as key strategic partners in relation to housing and disability issues in 2011 – 2012 and in continuing to involve disabled people in identifying solutions and driving forward work in this area. This continuing involvement is crucial to the success of tackling the housing problems faced by disabled people. In order to secure peoples' continuing involvement it is vital to provide feedback to people about the impact of their involvement. Every participant at the conference will receive a copy of this report and we hope to be able to provide delegates with information in relation to the action the Scottish Government plans to take as a result.

Appendix 1: The New Zealand Model for Equipment and Adaptations

The system of providing aids and adaptations in New Zealand is largely centralised, with the majority of aids and adaptations being delivered by the voluntary sector organisation Enable New Zealand. Enable provides specialised equipment, housing modifications and vehicle purchase and modifications. It has responsibility for the delivery of the Ministry of Health Equipment and Modification Services (EMS) contract via the Enable Processing team.

The service Enable New Zealand provide includes:

- Providing Specialised Equipment
- Equipment Repairs, Refurbishing and Reissuing Equipment
- Housing Modifications
- Vehicle Assessment
- Vehicle Purchase
- Vehicle Modifications

Each year Enable Processing handles approximately:

- 74,500 new equipment purchases
- 3,124 housing applications
- 47,000 phone calls
- 30,240 equipment reissues saving the Ministry of Health \$16.2 Million
- 55 vehicle applications
- 14,560 equipment repairs

Capability made contact with Enable New Zealand³⁵, who run the system and learnt the following from the General Manager, Heather Browning:

“Enable New Zealand is contracted by both the Ministry of Health and by the Accident Compensation Commission (ACC) to purchase equipment and housing modifications in most or all of New Zealand (depending on the contract). We are one of two providers of these services and we cover most of New Zealand but although there are two providers, the policy framework under which we operate for Ministry of Health is consistent throughout New Zealand and the ACC legislation is also consistent throughout the country.

We administer funds and act as brokers for equipment purchase – running procurement processes / tendering for a range of equipment items and categories. We then coordinate distribution and where relevant, the recall, cleaning, refurbishment and re-issue of high cost aids. This approach delivers considerable savings (approx \$10 million per annum³⁶) to the Ministry of Health and around \$1M to ACC each year against the cost of new purchase.

To maintain and repair equipment we train, coordinate and monitor a subcontracted network of Technicians around the country.

In respect of housing modifications, we coordinate the process of drafting plans, seeking quotes and coordinating builders and contractors for all building work for Ministry of Health and ACC. There are quite rigorous access and eligibility criteria within which we work and determine eligibility for funding streams and allocations. Overall, whilst there are always detractors of systems, I think the New Zealand system works well.”

³⁵ <http://www.enable.co.nz/services/equipment-and-modifications-services>

³⁶ £4.5 million

This report is available in a variety of accessible formats. To discuss your requirements please contact the advice service at Capability Scotland on 0131 313 5510 or ascs@capability-scotland.org.uk.

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