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# Accessible social housing in Wales: a review of systems for assessment, recording and matching



# Accessible social housing in Wales: a review of systems for assessment, recording and matching

This is a report from a research collaboration between Shelter Cymru and Disability Wales.

Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

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## **Glossary**

### **Accessible Housing Register (AHR)**

A register that:

- (i) identifies disabled people in need of accessible homes,
- (ii) identifies accessible properties, their location and characteristics,
- (iii) enables effective matching of people and suitable homes<sup>1</sup>

### **Common housing register**

A housing register which some, or all, of the social landlords in an area participate aimed at simplifying access to social housing. The group of landlords use a single application form by which anyone seeking housing in their area can register their need, and specify their housing preferences. Participating landlords then prioritise and select applicants from the single pool of applicants according to their own allocations policy.<sup>2</sup>

### **Disabled Facilities Grant**

A local council grant to help towards the cost of adapting homes to enable the existing disabled resident(s) to continue to live there. A grant is paid when the council considers that changes are necessary to meet individual needs, and that the work is reasonable and practical.<sup>3</sup>

### **Social model of disability**

This makes the important distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability'. Disability is caused by 'barriers' or elements of social organisation which take little or no account of people who have impairments. The social model:

- (i) is about embracing equality and diversity
- (ii) doesn't blame the individual, or turn them into the problem
- (iii) involves everyone in identifying solutions
- (iv) encourages co-operative problem-solving
- (v) removes barriers for others as well as disabled people
- (vi) acknowledges disabled people's rights to full participation as citizens<sup>4</sup>.

### **Stakeholders**

In the current study, a stakeholder refers to any social landlord or person who works with disabled people in Wales.

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<sup>1</sup> Housing Corporation/HoDiS (2005) A Perfect Match? A good practice guide to disability housing registers

<sup>2</sup> Taken from: Stirling, T., (2009) : Accessible Housing Registers in Wales  
<http://www.disabilitywales.org/activities/accessible-housing-registers-in-wales>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

# 1 Introduction and background to the study

## *Introduction*

- 1.1 Accessible Housing Registers are one way in which social landlords can identify accessible and adapted social rented properties and match them with the needs and choices of disabled people.
- 1.2 An Accessible Housing Register is a register that<sup>5</sup>:
  - (i) identifies disabled people in need of accessible homes;
  - (ii) identifies accessible properties, their location and characteristics;
  - (iii) enables effective matching of people and suitable homes.
- 1.3 There is currently no legal requirement for social landlords to provide this service, although they are encouraged to do so by the Welsh Government.
  - (i) The Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan<sup>6</sup> includes commitments to gather evidence on the use of Accessible Housing Registers and to promote their use as part of the Local Government collaborative reform programme.
- 1.4 The Welsh Government commissioned Shelter Cymru to conduct this study, in collaboration with Disability Wales, in order to meet these commitments . Work on this review commenced in July 2012, with the following aims:
  - (i) to ascertain the extent to which Accessible Housing Registers (and other matching systems) are used by social landlords in Wales;
  - (ii) to ascertain the benefits of these registers for disabled people who are trying to obtain suitable housing; and
  - (iii) to identify any benefits for social landlords - and local authorities in their strategic role - from the registers.

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<sup>5</sup> Housing Corporation/HoDiS (2005) *A Perfect Match? A good practice guide to disability housing registers*

<sup>6</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/equality/equalityactatwork/?lang=en>

## **Report structure**

- 1.5 The remainder of this chapter provides context to the current research study.
- 1.6 Chapter 2 highlights the key findings from the research.
- 1.7 Chapter 3 illustrates the detailed findings of the research. Findings were grouped into the following themes:
  - (i) how many and what types of Accessible Housing Registers have been set up;
  - (ii) the role of Accessible Housing Registers at the strategic level;
  - (iii) matching processes;
  - (iv) the impact of the various matching systems employed;
  - (v) costs and savings; and
  - (vi) the feasibility of an Accessible Housing Register in the private rented sector.
- 1.8 The conclusion and a series of suggested next steps are presented in Chapter 4. These suggestions are a result of the research findings from the current study.
- 1.9 Appendix 1 details the matching systems operating in the 22 local authorities.
- 1.10 Appendix 2 highlights some case study examples of the different approaches social landlords take to matching disabled people to accessible housing in Wales.
- 1.11 Appendix 3 details some of the ways in which disabled people have been assisted by Accessible Housing Registers and other matching systems.

## **Context**

- 1.12 According to a Housing Conference Report (2011)<sup>7</sup>, in many cases social rented housing fails to meet disabled people's requirements.

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<sup>7</sup> Housing corporation report (2011): [http://www.capability-scotland.org.uk/media/88925/the\\_future\\_of\\_housing\\_for\\_disabled\\_people\\_capability\\_scotland\\_conference\\_report\\_april\\_2011.pdf](http://www.capability-scotland.org.uk/media/88925/the_future_of_housing_for_disabled_people_capability_scotland_conference_report_april_2011.pdf)

- 1.13 The report states that the lack of housing stock, coupled with allocation policies that some people perceive as unfair, leads to disabled people failing to access suitable accommodation and, as a result, they live in completely unacceptable conditions. Suitable and accessible housing is essential to ensure disabled people are to live independently in the community and have choice and control.
- 1.14 *“Living in an accessible home is known to improve a person’s independence, reduce adult social care and housing adaptation costs and reduce admissions to residential care facilities.” (Wise, 2012).<sup>8</sup>*
- 1.15 In addition, the cost savings of adapting unsuitable property for disabled people has been highlighted by a number of recent research studies, for example, Cardiff Business School (2010)<sup>9</sup> discussed evidence that suggested that there is a high correlation between receiving a Disabled Facilities Grant and an average delay in admission into residential care of four years. They noted that, despite the number of potential confounding variables, the cost of four years of residential care is approximately £80,000 per person compared the average cost of a Disabled Facilities Grant of around £7,000<sup>10</sup>.
- 1.16 A substantial number of research studies have indicated that there is a shortage of adapted and accessible housing (see, for example, Housing Corporation, 2001<sup>11</sup>; Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2008<sup>12</sup>; and Homes Connections, 2008<sup>13</sup>). In light of an ageing population, this issue is likely to become increasingly pertinent, hence the need to ensure that adapted (or easily adapted) and accessible homes are appropriately let.
- 1.17 The Welsh Government’s Framework for Action on Independent Living is due to be published in Autumn 2013. Accessible housing

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<sup>8</sup> Wise (2012) - Access point: Improving housing choice for disabled people:  
[http://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_library/Resources/Housing/Support\\_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN\\_Viewpoint\\_35\\_Accessible\\_Housing\\_Registers.pdf](http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN_Viewpoint_35_Accessible_Housing_Registers.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> [http://www.wao.gov.uk/assets/englishdocuments/Systems\\_Thinking\\_Report\\_eng.pdf](http://www.wao.gov.uk/assets/englishdocuments/Systems_Thinking_Report_eng.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> These figures were correct at the time of the reported research in 2010

<sup>11</sup> Housing Corporation/Pathways Research/Habinteg/Papworth (2001) Pathways to Accessible Housing Guide to assessing the housing and support needs of wheelchair users

<sup>12</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2008) Housing and disabled children

<sup>13</sup> Homes Connections (2008) Choice for Disabled Londoners The London Accessible Housing Register Project and Toolkit

is a crucial element of the Framework, which supports the Welsh Government's Strategic Equality Plan and Objectives<sup>14</sup>, specifically Objective 5: "Tackle barriers and support disabled people so that they can live independently and exercise choice and control in their daily lives."

- 1.18 The Framework for Action on Independent Living (Consultation document, September 2012)<sup>15</sup> states that the legacy of poor design and build quality increases the need for adaptations, assistive technology and other support.
- 1.19 There is also an obligation under the Common Housing Register Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act for Social Services to ensure that people are adequately housed<sup>16</sup>.
- 1.20 The Equality Act<sup>17</sup> (2010) substantially replaced the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Section 4 of the Act makes 'Disability' a protected characteristic. The purpose of the Act is to prevent a person being disadvantaged because of a 'protected characteristic' in comparison to a person without that characteristic.
- 1.21 Sections 19-22 of the Act discuss requirements to ensure reasonable adjustments can be made for disabled persons so that they are not disadvantaged. This could include adaptations to buildings. Failure to comply with this duty could be viewed as discrimination. This is not to say, however, that discrimination would necessarily exist by not adapting properties. This would be assessed on a case by case basis and would often fall to practicality rather than principles (for example, if adaptations cannot be made).
- 1.22 In addition, the Human Rights Act<sup>18</sup> states that while social housing providers, especially local authorities, are likely to be subject to statutory or regulatory obligations regarding the needs of disabled residents, there is no human right to the provision of a

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<sup>14</sup> <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/equality/equalityactatwork/?lang=en>

<sup>15</sup> Framework for action on independent living – consultation document (2012):  
<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/equality/frameworkforactionconsultation/?lang=en>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1970/44>

<sup>17</sup> Housing and the Disability Equality Duty A guide to the Disability Equality Duty and Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for the social housing sector (undated)

<sup>18</sup> [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)



home with particular aids or adaptations. Indeed, there is no human right to the provision of *any* home at all. Nevertheless, social housing providers, under certain circumstances, are obliged to address difficulties that prevent tenants from enjoying their homes.

- 1.23 Significant funding has been allocated by the Welsh Government to improve the quality of social rented accommodation (Welsh Housing Quality Standard, 2012<sup>19</sup>). Part VII of the document (pages 28-32) makes clear the need to ensure that, as far as possible, accommodation meets the need of the household, including the needs of disabled people.
- 1.24 Where existing dwellings are intended for residents with specific needs, they should, wherever possible, be improved so that the layout of the dwelling reflects current good practice. All necessary aids and adaptations to meet the specific requirements of any residents, including disabled people, should be provided. It is recognised within the standard that, sometimes, individual rooms in an otherwise acceptable dwelling may fall just short of the standard required and that to enlarge the room in question is not possible or cost effective.
- 1.25 Lifetime Homes are designed to incorporate features that add to the comfort and convenience of the home and support the changing needs of individuals and families at different stages of life, including the needs of wheelchair users. All new social housing funded by Welsh Government is built to the Lifetime Homes standard.
- 1.26 In addition, Planning Policy Technical Advice Note 22<sup>20</sup> requires new housing in Wales to be built to Level 3 Code for Sustainable Homes and many of these homes achieve Lifetime Homes as part of the process of gaining credits towards Code Level 3.
- 1.27 The Welsh Government funds social housing with wheelchair access through Social Housing Grant or Physical Adaptation Grant. These homes are provided to meet the needs of a specific client or family.

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<sup>19</sup> Welsh Housing Quality Standards (2012)  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/statistics/headlines/housing2012/121015/?lang=en>

<sup>20</sup> TAN- <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/planning/policy/tans/tan22/?lang=en>

1.28 The Framework for Action on Independent Living (2012)<sup>21</sup> states that there have been examples of expensive adaptations being removed from vacant properties which could have benefited a new disabled tenant. Given the lack of suitable housing stock, this is an important issue.

### ***Accessible Housing Registers Explained***

1.29 As noted in the introduction to this report, Accessible Housing Registers are one way in which social landlords can identify accessible and adapted social rented properties and match them with the needs and choices of disabled people.

1.30 An Accessible Housing Register is a register that<sup>22</sup>:

- (i) identifies disabled people in need of accessible homes;
- (ii) identifies accessible properties, their location and characteristics; and
- (iii) enables effective matching of people and suitable homes

1.31 The above definition is the criterion used in the current study to define an Accessible Housing Register. Nevertheless, there exist different definitions of what constitutes an Accessible Housing Register, some of which are described below.

1.32 The Framework for Action on Independent Living describes an Accessible Housing Register as comprising a common register that is shared between social landlords and is actively managed (Framework for Action on Independent Living, 2012).

1.33 However, an Accessible Housing Register is variously understood as a separate list of accessible and adapted properties, a methodology for assessing properties and/or the integration of access information into mainstream housing management functions<sup>23</sup>. In addition, some areas use the Accessible Housing Register information to advertise properties on Choice Based Lettings systems.

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<sup>21</sup> Framework for action on independent living – consultation document (2012): <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/equality/frameworkforactionconsultation/?lang=en>

<sup>22</sup> Housing Corporation/HoDiS (2005) *A Perfect Match? A good practice guide to disability housing registers*.

<sup>23</sup> Wise (2012) - Access point: Improving housing choice for disabled people: [http://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_library/Resources/Housing/Support\\_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN\\_Viewpoint\\_35\\_Accessible\\_Housing\\_Registers.pdf](http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN_Viewpoint_35_Accessible_Housing_Registers.pdf)

- 1.34 Wise (2012)<sup>24</sup> notes that Accessible Housing Registers subsumed within Choice Based Lettings systems require households to proactively search and bid for properties on a weekly basis. The author notes that this type of Accessible Housing Register might not be effective for households in highest priority need, who may need assistance with lettings processes. The issue of accessibility is also relevant in respect of the introduction of online registrations, which might be difficult for some disabled people to use.
- 1.35 Stakeholders in Wales acknowledge the value of Accessible Housing Registers. Nevertheless, there are differences of opinion as to whether stand-alone Accessible Housing Registers are the most effective way to match accessible properties and households with specific mobility needs or whether they should be incorporated within local Common Housing Registers.<sup>25</sup>
- 1.36 'A Perfect Match'<sup>26</sup>, published by the Housing Corporation in 2005, states the benefits of Accessible Housing Registers as follows:
- (i) being better able to match available accommodation with the housing needs of disabled;
  - (ii) making better use of existing resources;
  - (iii) reducing the number of empty properties;
  - (iv) improving the turnaround time for letting accessible housing to people who need such accommodation;
  - (v) avoiding unnecessary spending on adaptations;
  - (vi) building up accurate information about the location and characteristics of existing accessible housing;
  - (vii) identifying more accurately the housing needs and preferences of disabled people;
  - (viii) identifying the locations where disabled people would like to live and where some housing could therefore be built for disabled people;
  - (ix) predicting more accurately the demand for housing for disabled people in particular localities where housing is planned.

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<sup>24</sup> *ibid*

<sup>25</sup> White Paper Consultation:  
<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/housewhitepaper/?lang=en>

<sup>26</sup> Housing Corporation/HoDiS (2005) A Perfect Match? A good practice guide to disability housing registers

- 1.37 It has been reported that the establishment of an Accessible Housing Register can lead to cost savings. Previous research has suggested that the savings accrued through better use of resources could offset the set-up costs for Accessible Housing Registers in five years<sup>27</sup> It is also noted that Accessible Housing Registers can contribute to a more efficient use of staff time and that operating an Accessible Housing Register is more a matter of ‘running savings’ than of ‘running costs’<sup>28</sup>.
- 1.38 The ‘London Accessible Housing Register’<sup>29</sup> is often viewed by stakeholders as a ‘gold standard’ example of how social landlords should approach the task. It is a framework for social housing landlords to assess the accessibility of their homes and categorise them, so accessible and adapted properties can be identified and matched at the earliest opportunity.
- 1.39 *“The London Accessible Housing Register enables disabled home seekers to participate in choice based lettings schemes alongside other housing applicants. Information on access features of a property facilitate informed housing choices and improved allocation of accessible accommodation.” (Wise, 2012).*<sup>30</sup>
- 1.40 *“Rather than aspiring to create a single, stand-alone London-wide listing, the objective is to encourage social landlords to adopt a common classification of their housing stock, where every home is rated in terms of its ‘accessibility’ features.” (Pawson & Sosensko, 2011).*<sup>31</sup>
- 1.41 Previous research has called for a ‘Disabled Persons Housing Service’<sup>32</sup> which would establish a cross-authority Disability Housing Register of adapted properties and disabled people seeking housing. This would link up with existing registers

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<sup>27</sup> Pawson, H. and Sosensko, F. Evaluation of the London Accessible Housing Register. Heriot Watt University, 2011.

<sup>28</sup> IBID

<sup>29</sup> London Accessible Housing Register - A good practice guide for social housing landlords and training materials are available at: [www.london.gov.uk/priorities/housing/housing-need/lahr](http://www.london.gov.uk/priorities/housing/housing-need/lahr)

<sup>30</sup> Wise (2012) - Access point: Improving housing choice for disabled people: [http://www.housinglin.org.uk/\\_library/Resources/Housing/Support\\_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN\\_Viewpoint\\_35\\_Accessible\\_Housing\\_Registers.pdf](http://www.housinglin.org.uk/_library/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Viewpoints/HLIN_Viewpoint_35_Accessible_Housing_Registers.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Pawson & Sosensko (2011). Evaluation of the London Accessible Housing Register. Heriot Watt University

<sup>32</sup> Disability Wales’ Accessible Housing Working Party (2004) There’s more to it than Wide Doors The case for a Disabled Persons Housing Service in South East Wales

developed by individual housing providers to avoid duplication and provide an effective service on a cross-boundary level.

1.42 As noted, there is currently no legal requirement to provide Accessible Housing Registers. However, the Welsh Government encourages social housing providers to adopt information systems that enable them to identify accessible and adapted social rented properties and match them with the needs and choices of disabled people. This was reiterated as part of the revised Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on the Allocation of Accommodation and Homelessness (2012).<sup>33</sup>

1.43 In the 2012 'Homes for Wales – A White Paper for Better Lives and Communities'<sup>34</sup> the Welsh Government stated its commitment to the further development of Accessible Housing Registers:

*“For disabled people of all ages, housing is a key enabler of independent living. Accessible and adapted housing enables people to maintain their independence, remain in their communities and exercise choice in the way they live their lives.”*

1.44 Research in the past has revealed a lack of provision in Wales. Jones (2005)<sup>35</sup> found that, in 2005, only two of the 22 Welsh local authorities had robust systems that combined a register of adapted properties with effective processes to match them to disabled people. A further two local authorities were in the process of developing such systems.

1.45 A further study into Accessible Housing Registers was undertaken in 2009 (Stirling, 2009)<sup>36</sup>. The aim of the project was to promote the benefits of Accessible Housing Registers in Wales:

- (i) as a tool to deliver equal access to housing;
- (ii) to promote independent living;

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<sup>33</sup> Code of guidance:  
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/housingandcommunity/housing/publications/guideallocateaccommodation/?lang=en>

<sup>34</sup> White Paper Consultation:  
<http://wales.gov.uk/consultations/housingcommunity/housewhitepaper/?lang=en>

<sup>35</sup> Disabled Facilities Grants and Adaptations Review – Wales. A report by Chris Jones for the Housing Directorate (2005)

<sup>36</sup> Stirling, T., (2009) : Accessible Housing Registers in Wales  
<http://www.disabilitywales.org/activities/accessible-housing-registers-in-wales>

- (iii) to help the Welsh Assembly Government and public bodies in the housing sector to meet the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 Disability Equality Duty; and
- (iv) to identify evidence to support making Accessible Housing Registers mandatory in all areas of Wales.

1.46 The research highlighted that Accessible Housing Registers are a valuable resource and are central to assisting disabled people to make informed choices about their accommodation requirements and options available.

1.47 The team stated that, as well as the definition of an Accessible Housing Register set out in 'A Perfect Match',<sup>37</sup> they considered that an Accessible Housing Register should be accessible and promoted to the public, potential service users and their advocates. Stirling (2009)<sup>38</sup> asserted that internal referral systems within local authorities that are not open to the public are not Accessible Housing Registers.

1.48 The 2009 report (ibid.) revealed substantial evidence of the shortage of adapted and accessible housing and highlighted a number of recommendations for the Welsh Government and local authorities to improve the provision of Accessible Housing Registers. These included:

- (i) the involvement of disabled people in the development of the system/approach, including seeking feedback from those who have been housed via an Accessible Housing Register;
- (ii) using the social model of disability<sup>39</sup> to inform the approach;
- (iii) identifying accessible/adapted/adaptable properties and ensuring they are available to those who need them;
- (iv) the assessment and prioritisation of need which looks at how people will be affected positively by a change in accommodation, considers need holistically (i.e. social as well as physical needs) and ensures that disabled people get priority for accessible/adapted properties;
- (v) the appropriate use of Occupational Therapist assessments;

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<sup>37</sup> Housing Corporation/HoDiS (2005) A Perfect Match? A good practice guide to disability housing registers

<sup>38</sup> Stirling, T., (2009) : Accessible Housing Registers in Wales  
<http://www.disabilitywales.org/activities/accessible-housing-registers-in-wales>

<sup>39</sup> The Social Model of Disability makes the important distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability'. Disability is caused by 'barriers' or elements of social organisation, which take little or no account of people who have impairments (Stirling, 2009)

- (vi) the inclusion of homes that are easily adaptable as well as those that are already adapted/ accessible;
- (vii) if the approach is seated within a choice-based lettings system, enabling disabled people to bid for a broader range of properties than those identified as accessible/adapted;
- (viii) taking a housing options approach that includes, as appropriate, adaptations to existing homes, private rented sector and ownership options to ensure disabled people have the same range of options as other housing applicants;
- (ix) monitoring the outcomes of the Accessible Housing Register in terms of numbers being re-housed and money saved to other budgets such as Disabled Facilities Grants<sup>40</sup> and Physical Adaptation Grants; and
- (x) local authorities and Registered Social Landlords should ensure that processes such as void inspection and asset management are used to identify adapted and easily adaptable properties.

1.49 Four years after Stirling's (2009) review of matching systems, it is useful to review the arrangements and systems that are currently operating, and to identify barriers and enablers to the success of the registers. In addition, it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of the Welsh Government's guidance in promoting Accessible Housing Registers.

1.50 Accessible housing is a crucial element of Disability Wales' and the Welsh Government's Framework for Action on Independent Living and Accessible Housing Registers are one way to tackle barriers and support disabled people so that they can live independently and exercise choice and control in their daily lives.

1.51 Furthermore, Accessible Housing Registers could be seen to help promote equality of opportunity for disabled people by encouraging diverse and sustainable communities. This is in line with the general duty as expressed in the Equality Act 2010.

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<sup>40</sup> Disabled Facilities Grants in Wales are funded out of local authority General Capital Funding which is unhypothecated. The grants are a mandatory entitlement and the Welsh Government does not set budgets for Disabled Facilities Grants centrally. In many cases, it is a condition (within rehousing / allocations policies) that before allowing a priority move to an adapted property, it must firstly be considered that the adaptation works required to the current property are not reasonable and practical to be carried out, and it is more likely that priority will thereafter be given to persons who cannot have works reasonably done to existing accommodation.

## ***Methodology and time frame***

- 1.52 The Research Team undertook a review of the use of Accessible Housing Registers (and equivalent matching systems) amongst social landlords in Wales.
- 1.53 The review involved the gathering of primary data from social landlords, wider stakeholders and disabled people who had experienced housing need.
- 1.54 The work was undertaken between July 2012 and December 2012.
- 1.55 Social landlords were primarily asked for their views via one of two online questionnaires. One questionnaire was aimed at social landlord staff who work at the strategic planning level, while the other was targeted at frontline staff.
- 1.56 All 22 local authority social landlords and all 37 large Registered Social Landlords, plus a small number (12) of *de minimis* social landlords in Wales were asked to complete the survey questionnaire.<sup>41</sup> We received 40 survey responses from social landlord staff who were working at the strategic level and 21 survey responses from frontline staff<sup>42</sup>. The vast majority of the survey responses were from local authorities and large registered social landlords, however we received four survey responses from *de minimis* landlords.
- 1.55 The questionnaire also asked for monitoring data regarding the outcomes and cost of Accessible Housing Registers, but the data provided was of varying quality and could not be used for a cost benefit consideration in the current study.
- 1.56 The second stage of the research involved:
- (i) a series of one-to-one interviews with seven stakeholders (including social landlords);
  - (ii) two focus groups with housing stakeholders to discuss how they match people with disabilities to suitable accommodation;

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<sup>41</sup> Registered Social Landlords (also known as Housing Associations) in Wales can be divided into two groups. Large landlords are subject to the Regulatory Framework for Housing Associations, by virtue of the number of dwellings that they own for let being 250 or greater, and smaller landlords that are 'de minimis' who let less than 250 dwellings

<sup>42</sup> The survey had been sent to all 22 local authorities, all 37 registered social landlords and 12 *de minimis* landlords.



- (iii) a focus group with Occupational Therapists from across Wales;  
and
- (iv) a series of one-to-one interviews with six disabled people who had experienced housing need.

1.57 A full list of survey respondents and other stakeholders involved in the research appears in appendix 4 on page 72.

1.58 The Research Team worked with a Peer Research Officer - a disabled person who had experienced housing need - in order to interview disabled participants. The use of the Peer Research Officer resulted in a more comfortable and productive interview experience for the research participants while also providing the Peer Researcher with transferable research skills.

## 2 Key Findings

- 2.1 The research found that all local authorities in Wales have a process for allocating disabled people to accessible housing. Fourteen local authorities told us that there is an Accessible Housing Register in the local authority area, whereas eight local authorities told us that either:
- (i) their process has some elements of an Accessible Housing Register;
  - (ii) they are in the process of developing an Accessible Housing Register; or
  - (iii) they have their own internal matching process.
- 2.2 There was extensive variation between each of the Accessible Housing Registers and how they operate, as well as differences between matching systems of those local authorities that do not have an Accessible Housing Register operating in the area.
- 2.3 We had a limited level of engagement with de minimis landlords in the current study. However, those who did engage with the research told us that they do not use an Accessible Housing Register.
- 2.4 It is clear that there is no 'typical' form of Accessible Housing Register. Rather, there are a series of matching schemes operating under the guise of an Accessible Housing Register. Some closely reflect the definition of an Accessible Housing Register set out in 'A Perfect Match' while others contain certain of its elements alongside other matching systems that have been adapted to the local area and housing stock of the particular social landlord.
- 2.5 We received 40 survey responses from social landlord staff who were working at the strategic level, representing 37 social landlords<sup>43</sup>. Just over half (21) of respondents said that they use an Accessible Housing Register to match disabled people to accessible homes and 19 said they did not. Out of 21 survey responses from frontline staff (representing 20 social landlords), 13 said that they use an Accessible Housing Register to match disabled people to homes and eight said they did not.

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<sup>43</sup> We did not receive a response from every social landlord . Conversely, on occasion, we received more than one response from different members of staff of particular social landlords.

- 2.6 There is evidence of variation in what social landlords believe constitutes an Accessible Housing Register. Despite this variation, the most common approach is to incorporate the Accessible Housing Register into the Common Housing Register.
- 2.7 Social landlords receive referrals to their Accessible Housing Registers from a number of sources, the most common being the homelessness department, Social Services and Occupational Therapy.
- 2.8 The main rationale for setting up the local Accessible Housing Register is to make best use of existing resources (all respondents agreed with this) and being better able to match the housing needs of disabled people with available accommodation (all respondents).
- 2.9 Amongst the 40 social landlord responses we had at the strategic level, less than two fifths of social landlords said that the Welsh Government's policy on encouraging Accessible Housing Registers impacted on the establishment or further development of their Register.
- 2.10 A quarter of social landlords stated that they were not aware of the Welsh Government's policy to encourage the use of Accessible Housing Registers (or did not know enough about it to comment).
- 2.11 Social landlords would like to see the Welsh Government financially back up and support the development of Accessible Housing Registers across organisations and local authority boundaries using existing good practice. There are, however, some concerns about Accessible Housing Registers being made mandatory for social landlords.
- 2.12 The monitoring of outcomes of social landlords' matching processes requires additional attention as it is currently very difficult to report on quantifiable outcomes of the Registers (or equivalent matching system). Social landlords themselves recognise the issue of monitoring outcomes as a matter for future attention.
- 2.13 A number of the Accessible Housing Registers in Wales do not meet the criteria of a register that is accessible and promoted to

the public, potential service users and their advocates, as Stirling (2009) proposed. Rather, such registers constitute internal matching systems.

- 2.14 Social landlords who use an Accessible Housing Register are more likely to have an effective system for identifying accessible / adapted / adaptable properties and ensuring their availability to those who need them than social landlords who do not use an Accessible Housing Register<sup>44</sup>.
- 2.15 Staff of social landlords that use an Accessible Housing Register are more likely to receive specialist training in matching people to their accessible home and feel more confident in their ability to do so.
- 2.16 Staff that use an Accessible Housing Register were more likely to consider a range of holistic needs amongst the people they assessed compared to those who do not.
- 2.17 There is more joint working between departments and organisations in order to best match people to accessible properties for social landlords who use an Accessible Housing Register.
- 2.18 There is still room for better communication (for example, between all housing providers in the area), and continuing improvements in joined-up working both internally and externally for many social landlords.
- 2.19 The majority of frontline staff who did not use an Accessible Housing Register would like to do so in the future.
- 2.20 Of those who did not want to use an Accessible Housing Register in the future, the reasons given included the perceived lack of suitability of their housing stock for adaptation and the perceived effectiveness of their current matching system. Nevertheless, service users would like to see all social landlords use an Accessible Housing Register.

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<sup>44</sup> Due to the varying nature of practice between landlords who said that they do and those that said they do not use an Accessible Housing Register, caution must be warranted when inferring differences between the groups. Although we report the differences between groups in this report, we urge caution with generalising these findings to all social landlords.

- 2.21 The main impact of Accessible Housing Registers is ensuring that adapted properties are retained for the use of disabled people and that disabled people are being re-housed in sustainable tenancies.
- 2.22 Social landlords who use an Accessible Housing Register consider that the biggest consequence of not using one could be an increased risk that disabled people would be housed/left housed in unsuitable accommodation. They also saw the restrictions in public sector spending and Housing Benefit reforms as the biggest barrier to the future success and implementation of the registers.
- 2.24 Other barriers include: the cost and expertise needed; lack of staff resource; limited housing stock; managing expectations; lack of leadership on the issue and changing service user needs.
- 2.25 Facilitators of setting up an Accessible Housing Registers include: commitment and buy-in from all partners; good record keeping and information sharing and strong partnership working.
- 2.26 The comparison of three case study Accessible Housing Registers (the ADAPT Scheme, Accessible Homes and Pathways) was difficult due to each Accessible Housing Register employing a different implementation method, operating in a different geographical location and housing market, collecting different outcome data and using different formulas to calculate costs and benefits. Despite these factors, there was anecdotal evidence that the savings made by the Accessible Housing Registers had outweighed the costs.
- 2.27 During our online survey, social landlords told us that although they could not quantify the exact savings to other budgets as a result of their Accessible Housing Register, there had been likely savings to a number of areas including: healthcare, delay into residential care, the adaptation budget and Social Services.
- 2.28 One third of the strategic respondents thought that an Accessible Housing Register could be implemented in the private rented sector. In addition, just over half of frontline staff who use an Accessible Housing Register agreed or strongly agreed that they should be used in the private rented sector.

2.29 Barriers to implementing Accessible Housing Registers in the private rented sector include landlord reluctance and security of tenure. Nevertheless, there is evidence of social landlords working with private landlords to match disabled people to accessible housing and an Accessible Housing Register in the private rented sector is seen as feasible with appropriate support from the Welsh Government and the public, private and voluntary sectors.

### 3 Detailed findings

#### ***How many and what types of Accessible Housing Registers have been set up?***

- 3.1 An Accessible Housing Register was defined to participants in the current study as a register that:
  - (i) identifies disabled people in need of accessible homes;
  - (ii) identifies accessible properties, their location and characteristics; and
  - (iii) enables effective matching of people and suitable homes.
- 3.2 We accrued evidence that all local authorities in Wales have a process for allocating disabled people to accessible housing. Fourteen local authorities told us that there is an Accessible Housing Register in the local authority area, whereas eight local authorities told us either that their process has some elements of an Accessible Housing Register, that they are in the process of developing an Accessible Housing Register or that they have their own matching process.
- 3.3 There was extensive variation between each of the Accessible Housing Registers and how they operated as well as differences between matching systems of those local authorities that do not have an Accessible Housing Register in the area. Details of the matching systems operating in the 22 local authorities are in Appendix 1.
- 3.4 We targeted a wide range of potential participants by inviting any strategic or frontline social landlord employee involved in matching disabled people to accessible homes to complete our survey.
- 3.5 This was an opportunity to review similarities and differences in approaches and compare both the process and perceived benefits of using an Accessible Housing Register compared to employing a matching system that does not involve the use of one.
- 3.6 We did not receive a response from every social landlord in Wales. Conversely, on occasion, we received more than one

response from different members of staff of particular social landlords.

- 3.7 Our survey and subsequent focus groups and interviews with stakeholders and service users also provided the opportunity to examine the objectives of the research.
- 3.8 We received 40 survey responses from social landlord staff who were working at the strategic planning level. Of these, just over half (21) said that they used an Accessible Housing Register to match disabled people to accessible homes and 19 said they did not.
- 3.9 Out of the 21 survey responses from frontline staff, 13 said they used an Accessible Housing Register to match disabled people to homes and eight said they did not.
- 3.10 Of survey respondents who stated that they use an Accessible Housing Register, nearly three quarters told us that their Accessible Housing Register contains a list of adapted / accessible properties. Nearly all stated that their Accessible Housing Register had a list of people who need adapted / accessible housing, whilst more than three quarters stated that their Register involves a formal process of matching people with properties.
- 3.11 Despite the definition of an Accessible Housing Register being made clear to participants in the current study, it appears that social landlords applied widely varying judgements as to whether the matching process they use constitutes an Accessible Housing Register.
- 3.12 This result also suggests that there is significant variation between how Accessible Housing Registers operate. There is no 'typical' Accessible Housing Register.
- 3.13 We asked survey respondents to detail their approach to using an Accessible Housing Register. Less than half of respondents stated that they have a stand-alone register which provides a matching service. Nearly two-thirds of respondents told us that their Register is incorporated into the local Common Housing Register, whilst a third stated that the Accessible Housing Register is incorporated into a Choice-Based Letting scheme.



- 3.14 Incorporating the Accessible Housing Register into the Common Housing Register was the most common approach to operating the Register.
- 3.15 *“The advantage if there is a common register is that it could provide additional choice for people crossing local authority boundaries. For example, if there is a common register, it gives tenants wider choice to access family support etc. The disadvantages would be whether or not there would be any compulsion on landlords so that a person might have to move to an area where they wouldn’t want to go – necessitating a change of carer, support network etc.” (Key stakeholder).*
- 3.16 The social landlords that use an Accessible Housing Register stated that they most often accept referrals from the Homelessness Department, Social Services and Occupational Therapy. However, some social landlords also take referrals from Children’s Health, hospital discharge, third sector organisations and support providers.

### ***The role of Accessible Housing Registers at the strategic level***

- 3.17 In this section, we examine social landlords’ rationale for using an Accessible Housing Register (including how much influence the Welsh Government policy of encouraging Accessible Housing Registers had on the decision) and the monitoring (and use) of data at the strategic level.
- 3.18 We asked those social landlords (n=19) that do not use an Accessible Housing Register how they meet the housing needs of people with disabilities.
- 3.19 *Rationale:* When we asked survey respondents what they had hoped to achieve in their strategic role through the setting up of the Accessible Housing Register, all agreed that the main rationale was to make best use of existing resources and being better able to match the housing needs of disabled people with available accommodation.

- 3.20 Other common rationales for setting up the Accessible Housing Registers were the ability to identify more accurately the housing needs and preferences of disabled people (over three quarters of respondents), as well as improving the turn-around time for letting accessible housing to people who need such accommodation (nearly half of respondents).
- 3.21 Of all of the social landlords at the strategic level, less than two fifths said that the Welsh Government's policy of encouraging Accessible Housing Registers impacted on the establishment, or further development, of their Accessible Housing Register.
- 3.22 *"We had established the scheme [Register], before there was any particular input from the Welsh Government, in response to the needs of our customers and in order to make best use of resources. In some areas it is difficult to establish the necessary will to set up a register. There is also not enough willingness to use the models that are already in existence and even the same staff in order to establish efficiencies. For example, we could quite easily extend the current model across other local authority areas and operate on a regional basis."* (Social landlord).
- 3.23 We asked strategic level survey respondents what they think the Welsh Government should do to ensure the effective set-up and maintenance of Accessible Housing Registers. Participants thought financial support from the Welsh Government was imperative both to set up and effectively implement Accessible Housing Registers, allowing for consistency, efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
- 3.24 *"Organisations know the benefits of an Accessible Housing Register. The Welsh Government just needs to financially support it. I do believe it's an area where regions can work together to make best use of the housing stock across a wider area, thereby meeting need and creating efficiencies"* (Social landlord).
- 3.25 *"We would like to see the introduction of a national, accessible register."* (Social landlord).
- 3.26 We asked frontline staff what they think of the Welsh Government's policy to encourage the use of Accessible Housing Registers and nearly two thirds thought it was a good idea.
- 3.27 *"Excellent - the sooner the better."* (Frontline staff).

- 3.28 However, a quarter stated that they were not aware of the policy or do not know enough about it to comment.
- 3.29 One stakeholder expressed some concern about the policy:  
*“I consider that their [the Welsh Government’s] well-intentioned wish to assist disabled people could in actuality result in the opposite effect by segregating people and properties, and remove choice as adapted homes may not be available in areas in which they want to live. We would like to reach a point at which all our properties (barring those that have been built on steep ground with steps to access) are actually available for all applicants, which is actually possible now due to the fast track system for Physical Adaptation Grants.” (Social landlord).*
- 3.30 During one of our focus groups, doubt was expressed as to whether Accessible Housing Registers should be mandatory in Wales. The reason given for this was:  
*“With all the new stuff coming in (welfare reform, new Housing Bill etc.) we’re going to be swamped already. We wouldn’t have the resources to handle Accessible Housing Registers as well. It would be great to have them but the timing is not right.” (Social landlord).*
- 3.31 Changes that social landlords have made to their adaptations, allocations or letting policies and procedures as a result of Accessible Housing Registers include:
- (i) changing policy and practice so that the needs of disabled clients are highlighted early, ensuring their housing needs are met;
  - (ii) policy inclusion covering the allocation and letting of adapted stock outside normal procedure;
  - (iii) modifications to shortlisting process to accommodate the matching of needs categories.
- 3.32 During the survey, we asked social landlords who do not use an Accessible Housing Register: “Given the requirement of the Equality Act 2010, where Accessible Housing Registers are not in place, how do you go about effectively meeting the housing needs of disabled people?”
- 3.33 We received a range of answers and it was clear that practice varied considerably between social landlords, but contained some common elements, such as:

- (i) advertising properties generally and, if a disabled person applies, considering the suitability of a property on a case-by-case basis
- (ii) identifying disabled people from the general waiting list who require specific adaptations and trying to match them with advertised properties that already have specific adaptations
- (iii) marking disabled applicants' applications as 'adapted needed'
- (iv) the use of Occupational Therapists (sometimes an in-house team) to whom housing officers can refer applicants with a need for adaptations.

3.34 *Monitoring*: Nearly three fifths of social landlords said that they were able to accurately monitor the number of adapted properties that they manage.

3.35 Only one third of social landlord respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they have effective systems to monitor the outcomes of the process in terms of numbers of disabled people being re-housed and money being saved to other budgets such as the Disabled Facilities Grant and Physical Adaptation Grants.

3.36 The evidence suggests that monitoring the outcomes of social landlord matching systems is an underdeveloped area that, at present, restricts the ability to quantify cost benefit savings.

3.37 *"The data is currently spread across a number of council departments and other housing providers. A consistent method of collation and storage would ensure that it [monitoring data] is more readily available and robust." (Social landlord).*

3.38 *"Registered Social Landlords do not consistently collect and report data. There are differing standards in relation to adaptations and timescales, depending on the Occupational Therapist and the Registered Social Landlord." (Social landlord).*

3.39 Of those that do feel they are able to effectively monitor outcomes (including equality monitoring), we asked how they undertake the monitoring exercise. Social landlords that use an Accessible Housing Register and those that do not both use a wide range of means to monitor outcomes, including:

- (i) collecting statistics;
- (ii) monitoring being undertaken by an external source;
- (iii) steering Groups and meetings to discuss outcomes; and
- (iv) service user feedback.

3.40 We asked social landlords how they use their monitoring data in their strategic role, if at all. Of those who use an Accessible Housing Register, half stated that the monitoring data is used to identify housing needs and local demand, whilst a small minority (under 10) reported using it to:

- (i) inform the budgets and to check the feasibility of continuing with the scheme;
- (ii) ensure that the monitoring data used to identify housing needs and local demand is 'fit for purpose' and;
- (iii) demonstrate the need for affordable homes.

3.41 *“There are great planning gains to be had in terms of data. It can determine future demand and need in particular areas for community profiling, quality of life for disabled people, efficiencies, leading to well structured systems.” (Key stakeholder).*

3.42 The monitoring the of outcomes of social landlords' matching processes was identified as an area that requires additional attention as it is currently very difficult to report on quantifiable outcomes of the Registers (or equivalent matching system).

3.43 When asked whether tenancy agreements had been revised to enable adapted properties to be recovered if no longer needed by the occupants (i.e. offering suitable alternative, non-adapted accommodation), more than two fifths of social landlords that use an Accessible Housing Register said yes, compared to just over one fifth of those that do not use one.

3.44 Nevertheless, this point was an issue of concern for some stakeholders:

*“Tenancy is something that I would not like to see time-limited. A family home is still a family home, whether or not the person still lives there (i.e. hasn't passed on) and should be done with the consent of people remaining at the property. Landlords should respect that it's not just a house but a home.” (Key stakeholder).*

### ***Matching systems and processes***

3.45 In this section, we offer broad comparisons on various approaches to matching accessible homes to disabled people and examine topics such as:

- (i) the process of publicising the Accessible Housing Registers to disabled people and wider stakeholders;
- (ii) identification of properties and the process of matching individual needs to accessible homes;
- (iii) staff training;
- (iv) assessing disabled people's needs; and
- (v) joint working.

3.46 Where possible, we make comparisons between social landlords that use an Accessible Housing Register and those that do not<sup>45</sup>.

3.47 *Advertising*: as noted in the literature review, Stirling (2009) noted that as well as the definition of an Accessible Housing Register set out in 'A Perfect Match', an Accessible Housing Register should be accessible and promoted to the public, potential service users and their advocates. Stirling (2009) asserted that referral systems within local authorities that are not open to the public are not Accessible Housing Registers.

3.48 However, during the research, just under three quarters of Accessible Housing Register operators told us that the register they use meets the requirement set out by Stirling (see ) of being open to the public and only just over two fifths stated that their Accessible Housing Register is advertised externally and promoted.

3.49 Arguably, therefore, some of the Accessible Housing Registers operating in Wales do not meet Stirling's (2009) definition of a register that is accessible and promoted to the public. Rather, such registers constitute internal matching systems (Stirling, 2009).

3.50 For those social landlords who do advertise the Accessible Housing Register, several means of doing so exist. These include:

- (i) publishing and advertising through support agencies;
- (ii) online advertising;
- (iii) publishing written material;
- (iv) advertising to stakeholders within the local authority.

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<sup>45</sup> 1.1 Due to the varying nature of practice between landlords who said that they do and those that said they do not use an Accessible Housing Register, caution is required when inferring differences between the groups. Although we report the differences between groups in this report, we urge caution with generalising these findings to all social landlords .

- 3.51 *“I have incorporated the Accessible Housing Register into the HOMES4U scheme which is advertised in the local media” (Social landlord).*
- 3.52 *“[The Accessible Housing Register is] displayed in reception areas of local housing providers working within the Common Housing Register.” (Social landlord).*
- 3.53 Service users we spoke to agreed that registers should be made public:  
*“These registers should be made public otherwise how are we supposed to know what they have available? If these Accessible Housing Registers were made public then we would be able to help find a suitable house for ourselves as well, we could help out in the process of locating suitable accommodation.” (Service user).*
- 3.54 *Identification of properties:* Over four fifths of social landlords who use an Accessible Housing Register agreed or strongly agreed that they have an effective system for identifying accessible / adapted / adaptable properties and ensuring they are available to those who need them. This compared to almost two fifths of social landlords who do not use an Accessible Housing Register.
- 3.55 Social landlords (both those that use an Accessible Housing Register and those that do not) use various means to identify accessible / adapted properties. Examples include undertaking a database or stock condition survey and feedback from applicants.
- 3.56 In addition, we asked strategic survey respondents whether void inspections take into account identifying adapted or properties suitable for adaptations. More than three quarters of social landlords with an Accessible Housing Register stated yes, compared to just over half of those who do not use a Register.
- 3.57 Thus, social landlords who use an Accessible Housing Register seem more likely to have an effective system for identifying accessible/adapted/adaptable properties and ensuring they are available to those who need them than those who do not use one.
- 3.58 There are various means by which social landlords identify and match people to an accessible home. Below are two examples – one from a social landlord with an Accessible Housing Register and the other from a social landlord without one. These examples

were selected from the range of processes demonstrated in the survey responses.

3.59 There are only subtle differences between the two processes, the main difference being that the social landlord with the Accessible Housing Register has a list of adapted/accessible properties in the area, a list of people who need such a property and an official system of matching the two together.

3.60 An example of the identification and matching process operated by a social landlord who uses an Accessible Housing Register is as follows:

- (i) an application is referred to their Accessible Housing Register scheme (the accessible homes scheme);
- (ii) the accessible homes scheme undertakes an Occupational Therapist<sup>46</sup> assessment and, based on this, the client is awarded a category based on their housing need requirements;
- (iii) when a property becomes available, the accessible homes scheme will draw up a list of disabled people needing a home who are on the accessible homes register requiring that size and type of property;
- (iv) the property is offered to the most suitable applicant.

3.61 An example of the identification and matching process operated by a social landlord who does not use an Accessible Housing Register is as follows:

- (i) the need of the applicant is identified either via the housing application, by a housing officer or by a Social Services referral;
- (ii) an Occupational Therapist undertakes a needs assessment and, where applicable, additional priority is awarded to the applicant;
- (iii) the applicant bids for a home of their choice via their Choice Based Lettings scheme;
- (iv) in complex cases, a direct match is made where a vacancy is not advertised through the Choice Based Lettings and is instead offered directly to the household involved.

3.62 *Staff training:* We asked survey respondents at the strategic level whether their staff receive specialist training in matching people to an accessible home. Nearly half of social landlords who use an Accessible Housing Register stated yes, compared to just over one tenth of social landlords who do not use one.

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<sup>46</sup> The Occupational Therapist works closely with the Accessible Homes Scheme

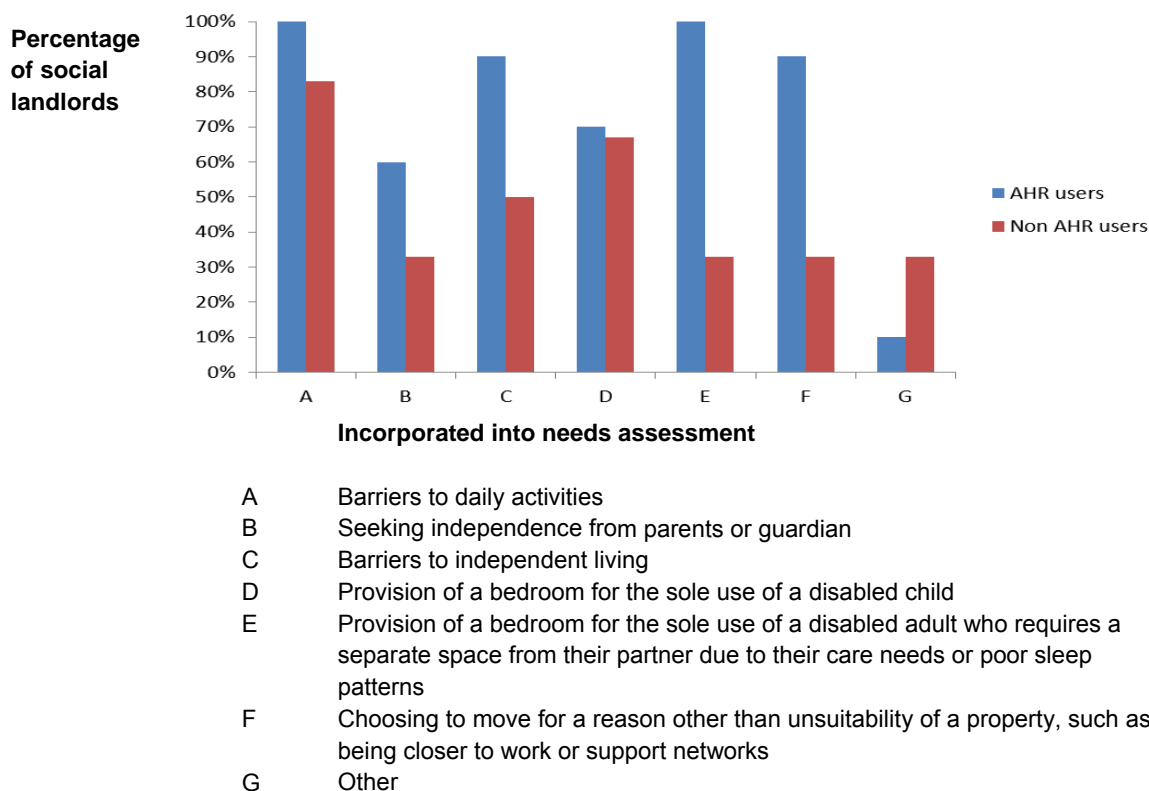


- 3.63 More than two thirds of frontline staff who use an Accessible Housing Register agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they are confident in their role that they are able to identify adapted properties (or properties that are suitable for adaptation) and match them to people who need them. This compared to only just over a third of frontline staff who are not linked in to an Accessible Housing Register.
- 3.64 Hence, staff of social landlords who use an Accessible Housing Register are more likely to both receive specialist training in matching people to an accessible home and to feel more confident in their ability to do so.
- 3.65 *“I think specialist training is very important. In my experience, there’s nothing more frustrating than dealing with staff who do not know what they are talking about or do not understand what you are telling them in terms of your needs as a disabled person.” (Service user).*
- 3.66 The issue of staff training was discussed in the focus groups as essential to the ability of staff to match disabled people with accessible homes.
- 3.67 An example was given of housing officers being under pressure to fill voids and not having sufficient understanding of the process needed to ensure that a property is suitable for a disabled applicant. This includes considerations such as an Occupational Therapist assessment and time for the applicant and family / support network to consider the suitability of the property. It was felt that this lack of understanding could lead to unsuitable allocations of adapted properties.
- 3.68 *“There needs to be training on policy because of impacts on equality and diversity and also [on the] issue of choice and options. There also needs to be training on other issues such as how it impacts on housing benefit reform. Also, specific support regarding Black and Minority Ethnic households where family support is much more integrated into the family’s culture.” (Key stakeholder).*
- 3.69 A suggestion from a service user was to include service users in both training and the culture of the organisation.

3.70 *“Another thing I think would improve the overall process would be if social landlords or people dealing with finding suitable accommodation for disabled people hired an actual disabled person to deal with people and also to provide training to staff on the issues of having a disability and living day to day life with a disability. I think only a disabled person can have the understanding of how difficult it is to live in non-suitable accommodation and only they can appreciate how hard life can be because they have had to go through it themselves” (Service user).*

3.71 *Assessing need:* We asked frontline Social Landlord staff what they incorporate when they assess a disabled person's needs. Figure 1 shows the results.

**Figure 1: Percentage of frontline staff who stated that they incorporated the following when they assessed people's needs – a comparison between staff working for a landlord that uses an Accessible Housing Register (AHR) and staff working for a landlord not using an AHR (n=21: AHR users = 13, non-AHR users = 8)**



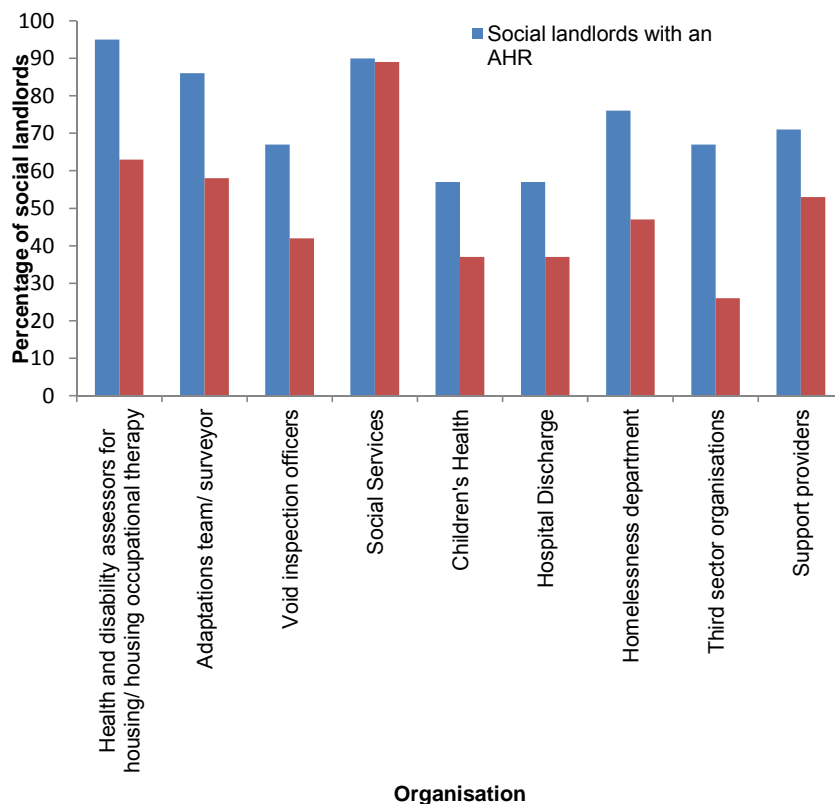
- 3.72 Figure 1 demonstrates that staff who use an Accessible Housing Register were more likely to consider a range of holistic needs compared to those who do not use one. These include considering the disabled person’s choice for moving, barriers to independent living and barriers to daily activities.
- 3.73 Two fifths of survey respondents explicitly stated that their organisation adopted the social model of disability.
- 3.74 *“By adapting the social model it allowed us to exercise a level of common sense. Everyone with a disability has their own specific needs. We visit and assess everybody with same criteria and source properties based on individual need.” (Social landlord)*
- 3.75 Nearly 100% of social landlords who use an Accessible Housing Register agreed or strongly agreed that they consider need holistically (i.e. social as well as physical needs) and ensure that

disabled people get priority for accessible / adapted properties. This compared to three quarters of social landlords who do not use an Accessible Housing Register.

3.76 *Joint working:* Figure 2 illustrates that there is more joint working between the following departments and organisations in order to best match people to accessible properties for social landlords who use an Accessible Housing Register.

3.77 It is not clear, however, whether joint working with numerous stakeholders results in the development of an Accessible Housing Register or if an Accessible Housing Register results in better communication between departments and organisations.

**Figure 2: Percentage of social landlords (n=21: Accessible Housing Register (AHR) users = 13, non-AHR users = 8) who undertake joint working with the following organisations**



3.78 We asked social landlord frontline staff to rate how effectively they view their joint working with other departments and

stakeholders. Nearly two thirds of staff whose organisation uses an Accessible Housing Register rated their joint working as effective or very effective, compared to just a quarter of staff whose organisations were not linked in to a register.

- 3.79 Of the frontline staff linked in to an Accessible Housing Register, nearly one third stated that the current partnerships and joined-up working are excellent and that nothing could improve these relationships. However, a further third felt that better communication (for example, between all housing providers in the area) and joined up working could be improved.
- 3.80 When asked how joint working could be improved, one frontline staff member who does not use an Accessible Housing Register stated: *“The development and implementation of an Accessible Housing Register would help.” (Social landlord).*
- 3.81 In our south Wales focus group, stakeholders discussed the need for a close joint working relationship between the Occupational Therapists and the housing staff.
- 3.82 *“Occupational Therapists bring the medical side; but we also need a multi-disciplinary team because, whilst Occupational Therapists are good at the medical side, they need to learn to deal with housing issues as well, so a multi-disciplinary team would provide the best outcome, as everyone has their own expertise and Occupational Therapists learn from Housing Agencies and vice versa.” (Key stakeholder).*
- 3.83 *Using Accessible Housing Registers in the future:* Nearly two thirds of frontline staff who do not use an Accessible Housing Register stated that their organisation should use one in the future.
- 3.84 Those staff who said they would not like to use an Accessible Housing Register gave a range of reasons, including the following:
- (i) The perceived lack of suitability of their housing stock for adaptations and disabled tenants:  
*“None of our [...] properties are fully suited for the severely disabled.” (Social landlord).*
  - (ii) The presence of effective systems already:

*“Our existing system includes and identifies disabled people so that they can be considered for any void property that may be adapted according to their needs. If disabled people were on a separate register to try to match adapted properties they would be waiting much longer as they very rarely become vacant. They would miss out on standard properties that could be adapted according to their needs.” (Social landlord).*

- 3.85 However, the service users we spoke to believed that Accessible Housing Registers should operate in all local authorities:
- “I think Accessible Housing Registers work very well. All of them [local authorities] should use an Accessible Housing Register. You can’t just have an incorporated system for accessible housing – you need a separate register to show all the accessible houses available and what sort of properties these are, what features they have and so on. Then social landlords would know immediately what they have available and what they don’t have available if accessible houses are on a separate register” (Service user).*

### ***The impact of the various matching systems employed***

- 3.86 In this section we consider the perceived benefits and outcomes of using an Accessible Housing Register (compared to not using one) to match disabled people to accessible properties. Next, we present the barriers to and facilitators of successfully implementing an Accessible Housing Register and achieving the desired objectives. Finally, and importantly, we discuss the perceived impact and benefits of the Registers for service users.
- 3.87 We asked frontline staff who use an Accessible Housing Register what they thought were the outcomes and impacts of the register. All of them agreed that the main impact was ensuring that adapted properties are retained for the use of disabled people and utilised to their full potential and ensuring that disabled people are re-housed in sustainable tenancies.
- 3.88 Frontline staff spoke of the benefits of being linked in to an Accessible Housing Register due to the expertise and speed of response.
- “Cardiff Accessible Homes is normally the first port of call for all things “adapted ” in Cardiff and therefore we can ensure we can provide a swift answer or solution.” (Frontline staff).*

- 3.89 Other benefits of the registers were viewed by frontline staff as:
- (i) a more efficient and effective use of existing adapted accommodation (mentioned by nearly all respondents);
  - (ii) the effective use of existing adapted properties to meet tenants' needs in a more timely way (nearly all);
  - (iii) a more customer focused service (nearly nine tenths);
  - (iv) ensuring equality in access to housing for disabled people (nearly nine tenths);
  - (v) the promotion of independent living (nearly nine tenths);
  - (vi) making best use of resources (nearly nine tenths); and
  - (vii) influencing the make-up of new social housing developments (nearly nine tenths).
- 3.90 We asked frontline staff that use an Accessible Housing Register what they thought would have been the consequences for disabled people if the registers had not been set up.
- 3.91 The biggest consequence identified was an increased risk that disabled people would be housed / left housed in unsuitable accommodation (more than four fifths).
- 3.92 There were also concerns that disabled people could become 'lost' amongst others on the general list (a quarter). Also mentioned by more than one person was that, without registers, adaptations would end up being removed at the tax payers' expense (nearly a fifth).
- 3.93 *"Conwy for example have over 5,000 people on housing registers in the County and, if not identified on a separate register, a lot of the applicants would not have been re-housed as they would be left in the big pool of other applicants as their needs would not have been met." (Social landlord).*
- 3.94 Other impacts of not using an Accessible Housing Register were thought to be:
- (i) a reduced ability to effectively map disabled people's needs and how many people locally require adapted/accessible housing;
  - (ii) a reduction in choice and opportunity to live independently for disabled people;
  - (iii) inappropriate housing leading to long-term effects – for example, *"Being offered a property which they cannot cope with and could be penalised for refusing" (Social landlord).*

- 3.95 *Barriers to and Facilitators of successfully implementing and sustaining an Accessible Housing Register.* We asked survey respondents who use an Accessible Housing Register what factors they think are likely to impact on the future successful implementation of the registers.
- 3.96 Two thirds stated that the impact of restrictions in public sector spending would have an effect; Housing Benefit reforms were also flagged by two thirds of respondents; changes to Disability Living Allowance was marked by a third of respondents and nearly three fifths mentioned changing demographics, for example, the ageing population.
- 3.97 Stakeholders we spoke to were very concerned about the impact of welfare reforms on disabled people and accessible housing.
- 3.98 *“[We] need to consider impact of welfare reforms and under-occupation penalties - is adapting an existing property that will cause financial hardship the best option, or is a move to more suitable accommodation the better option.” (Key stakeholder).*
- 3.99 We asked strategic survey respondents how effective they think their register is for assisting disabled people who are looking to transfer/downsize<sup>47</sup>. Only a quarter said that their process is effective, with the rest saying that this is an issue they are either currently working or aiming to address.
- 3.100 *“We are currently focusing resources on supporting under-occupying residents to downsize, and we would seek to offer a personalised service to match disabled applicants to the right property in terms of meeting their needs and financial situation.” (Social landlord).*
- 3.101 It was thought by some stakeholders that an Accessible Housing Register is a good means to deal with the issue of under-occupancy.
- 3.102 *“You do need to have landlords co-operating via a register because more and more are moving towards common allocation lists. It is really important because where there is under occupation and they have an adapted policy and they want to /*

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<sup>47</sup> 20 people provided responses



*are allowed to downsize, if you have a wider pool it's easier to reallocate. This can be done via a common Accessible Housing Register and landlords should be able to identify on the list which properties have been adapted and how.” (Key stakeholder).*

- 3.103 Service users also spoke of their concern over changes to welfare benefits, especially the issue of under-occupation. A service user participant told us that because he is retired he is exempt but his wife is of working age so they are affected by the 'bedroom tax'. They occasionally have to use separate bedrooms but they are still classed as needing only one bedroom. This is a source of anxiety for the service user and his wife.
- 3.104 Survey respondents who use Accessible Housing Registers also see the set up costs (two fifths) and lack of staff resource, including Occupational Therapists (again, two fifths) as barriers to barriers to setting up an Accessible Housing Register
- 3.105 Facilitators of setting up an Accessible Housing Register are viewed as: commitment and buy-in from all partners (nearly a quarter). Amongst those who do not have an Accessible Housing Register, good record keeping and information sharing was seen as necessary to facilitate the set up of an Accessible Housing Register (two fifths) and strong partnership working (one fifth).
- 3.106 Frontline staff who use an Accessible Housing Register stated that the facilitators of the success of the registers are as follows:
- (i) the importance of joint working (more than one third);
  - (ii) effective recording systems (nearly one fifth);
  - (iii) good leadership and dedicated staff (nearly one fifth).
- 3.107 *“We need to ensure that any computer system identifies the need for an adapted property. This has been a barrier as it depends what information you put into the system to get the result required.” (Social landlord).*
- 3.108 Barriers mentioned by participants included the availability of stock by geographical area; changing needs; the cost of setting up the registers; a lack of leadership on the matter and;

matching expectations with reality in terms of the availability of adapted housing.

- 3.109 *“The main barrier has been lack of leadership on the issue [...] we need pilot projects that are pushed by someone in authority.” (Key stakeholder).*

### ***Costs, savings and wider benefits***

- 3.110 During the research, we attempted to obtain enough monitoring and cost data to undertake a brief cost benefit analysis. However, due to a lack of sufficient data, this was not possible. Nevertheless, we have been able to collate some information from three social landlords about the costs incurred and savings accrued from the Accessible Housing Registers that they operate, thanks to the scheme managers providing us with some of their monitoring data.
- 3.111 The information presented on the three schemes is not comparable due to the myriad variables that affect the results, both within individual schemes and across schemes and local contexts. The paragraphs below only seek to describe some considerations as to costs and benefits and cannot be regarded as a cost benefit analysis.
- 3.112 In addition, we suggest some wider benefits that may have been delivered from our online survey findings.
- 3.113 The three Accessible Housing Registers discussed below are:
- (i) the ADAPT scheme that operates in Swansea;
  - (ii) the Accessible Homes scheme that operates in Cardiff; and
  - (iii) Pathways to Adapted Housing that operates in Rhondda Cynon Taf.
- 3.114 In terms of cost, ADAPT told us that the total cost to run ADAPT annually is £72,825.72 (based on 2012-13 figures). This figure covers staff salaries, employer’s National Insurance / pension, staff travel costs, training costs, office overheads, PCs / mobiles, events, PR / leaflets / website, external database maintenance and IT support.

- 3.115 In terms of predicted cost savings, ADAPT told us that, although it was not possible to quantify the exact saving, they believe that the scheme has led to reduction of costs to departments such as Social Services which provide care to disabled persons when they are in unsuitable accommodation.
- 3.116 Accessible Homes told us that the annual cost (based on 2012-13 figures) is approximately £105,000, which includes two full time staff and 15 hours of Occupational Therapist time per week).
- 3.117 Accessible Homes had looked in depth at cost savings of their scheme in 2007. Their calculation for savings was based on the number of people they housed who were on the Disabled Facilities Grant waiting list at that time. They stated that the average cost of a Disabled Facilities Grant in the area at the time was £10,000 and they were able to house 34 people requiring a Disabled Facilities Grant. They therefore calculated the gross savings to be £340,000. They argue that the savings made to the Disabled Facilities Grant have outweighed the cost of running the project.
- 3.118 The manager of the Pathways scheme told us that the staffing and administrative costs are difficult to quantify due to the fact that the scheme is operated within the housing, homelessness and allocations services operating within the same offices. The scheme manager told us that this arrangement provides cost efficiencies and allows for a range of housing services to be utilised, dependent on the needs of disabled households applying to the scheme. Nevertheless, this sharing of resources and associated costs means it is not possible to differentiate as to what the individual services costs equate to.
- 3.119 The project manager of the Pathways scheme explained to us that there are also difficulties in putting an exact figure on the savings derived from the retention and allocation of the adapted housing stock via their scheme. However, they did describe an exercise completed in 2008 by their grants department.
- 3.120 This exercise applied an average cost associated with a minimum range of adaptations needed by applicants to the scheme. This figure was then multiplied by the number of applicants who had been housed within the adapted housing

stock and doubled to reflect the cost of maintaining existing adaptation work.

- 3.121 In the six prior years of operation on which the 2008 exercise was based, application of the above method of calculating saved costs identified a cost saving of £1.2 million. The project manager suggested that applying this same formula for period from 2008 to the present would show an equal associated saving, making a total estimated saving of £2.4 million since 2002.
- 3.122 Other hypothesised benefits of the scheme include the hidden benefits to society, such as savings to the health and social care services and reacting to problems faced by disabled households who might otherwise have remained in unsuitable, inaccessible accommodation.
- 3.123 *Rehousing:* We asked the schemes about the numbers of people re-housed via the scheme. ADAPT told us that, since the Accessible Housing Register was set up in Swansea, a total of 237 households have been re-housed via the project.
- 3.124 Accessible Homes told us that 1,304 people have been re-housed since 2003 and that they house between 130-150 clients per year.
- 3.125 Pathways told us that, since the scheme started in 2002, there have been 546 disabled households that have been placed in adapted accommodation within the borough.
- 3.126 *Waiting times:* ADAPT told us that the average time to re-house was 8.6 months in 2010-11 and 12.3 months in 2011-12.
- 3.127 Accessible Homes reported that the average waiting time is 11 months. They reported that, unfortunately, there are cases that have been on the list since they became operational but this is due to applicants only wanting to consider certain areas and property types etc. Conversely, they have housed people on their 'urgent' list within four weeks.
- 3.128 The project manager of the Pathways scheme questioned the reliability of allocation times in association with specific allocation methods. He explained that the very nature of the service and

the client base for whom they provide the service presents too many variables in relation to the:

- (i) type of disability and level of need;
- (ii) availability of suitably adapted and accessible accommodation within each area coupled with the demand for specific areas; and
- (iii) a lack of data sets to compare like for like allocations.

3.129 *Number of applicants on the register compared to numbers of adapted/accessible stock locally.* The Research Team was unable to obtain any meaningful data on this issue. We were told by project managers of schemes that it is not possible to extract accurate figures of levels of adapted/accessible stock locally. However, as of November 2012, the ADAPT Register had 257 households on their register and Accessible Homes had 489<sup>48</sup>.

3.130 Robust analysis of the presented information on the three schemes is not possible due to the myriad variables that affect the results, both within individual schemes and across schemes and local contexts. The above information, therefore, can only be regarded as presenting some considerations as to costs and benefits and cannot be regarded as a cost benefit analysis.

3.131 Also, it is clear that each Accessible Housing Register employs a different implementation method, operates in different geographical locations and housing markets, collects different outcome data and uses different formulas to calculate costs and benefits.

3.132 This makes comparisons between Accessible Housing Registers unfeasible at the time of the research. Nevertheless, with improvements to standardised data collection and the implementation of a robust cost benefit methodology,<sup>49</sup> the relative success, costs and savings of the individual Accessible Housing Registers could be compared.

3.133 On a broader level, during our online survey, we asked social landlords if they think that there have been costs or savings to other organisations as a result of the registers<sup>50</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> No data was provided by Pathways

<sup>49</sup> The current research allowed only the briefest consideration of the cost considerations of Accessible Housing Registers.

<sup>50</sup> We received 16 responses to this question

- 3.134 The most frequent answer was that the Accessible Housing Register had very likely resulted in savings to other budgets but they were unable to provide evidence for this (either because it was too early in the Accessible Housing Register's implementation or because they had not undertaken specific research to identify this)<sup>51</sup>.
- 3.135 *"We have not sought to quantify these savings. However, perhaps we should in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of the register." (Social landlord).*
- 3.136 It was noted that there were *likely* to have been savings to a number of areas, the most popular being:
- (i) health care (for example, hospital discharge);
  - (ii) delay into residential care;
  - (iii) the adaptation budget;
  - (iv) Social Services.

### ***The feasibility of an Accessible Housing Register in the private rented sector***

- 3.137 A theme that arose during the research was that there is a chronic lack of adapted housing and the suggestion that closer working with private sector landlords might help to resolve this.
- 3.138 One third of strategic survey respondents thought that an Accessible Housing Register could be implemented in the private rented sector.
- 3.139 Meanwhile, just over half of frontline staff who use an Accessible Housing Register agreed or strongly agreed that Accessible Housing Registers should be used in the private rented sector.
- 3.140 *"We have a lack of adapted properties, therefore joint working with private landlords could improve the service." (Social landlord).*
- 3.141 There were, however, concerns regarding barriers to implementing Accessible Housing Registers in the private rented sector, including the reluctance of private rented sector landlords
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to offer adapted housing due to the reduced chance of renting it to the general market:

- 3.142 *“Private landlords are unlikely to co-operate, they want to let their properties as quickly as possible and maximise rental income.” (Social landlord).*
- 3.143 We spoke to a disabled service user in the private rented sector who said their current housing did not meet their needs due to lack of accessibility, but faced reluctance from their landlord when they requested an adaptation.
- 3.144 The service user told us that they had requested a walk-in shower but was refused due to the landlord not wanting to change the property.  
*“I’ve asked them twice, and I had a letter back within six days, saying no, that we sympathise with you, but the landlord, she doesn’t want the property altered. I told them, ‘You won’t have to pay’, and the bloke said ‘I know, but she doesn’t want the property altered.’” (Service user).*
- 3.145 Participants also felt that where the private rented sector was concerned, security of tenure, the suitability of properties for adaptation and the overall standards of accommodation could also be significant barriers to the success of an Accessible Housing Register in the sector.
- 3.146 Nevertheless, other social landlords suggested that barriers are not insurmountable:  
*“We have two very recent examples of private landlords who approached us seeking disabled tenants for their adapted properties. Both have now been occupied by disabled tenants.” (Social landlord).*
- 3.147 Evidence suggests that the success of Accessible Housing Registers in the private rented sector depends heavily on support and advice for private landlords.
- 3.148 The National Landlords Association said that they believe there is scope for an Accessible Housing Register within the private rented sector, but this need to be developed and introduced after all parties – across the private, public and voluntary sectors – have discussed the issue in an “atmosphere of open-

mindedness with an understanding of what each sector can contribute”.

- 3.149 The suggestion by the Association was to run a pilot within a local authority (involving the local authority, registered social landlords and private landlords) for at least 12 months.
- 3.150 They felt this would deliver sustainable long term tenancies, but it would need to be driven by the private rented sector and supported by the Welsh Government.



## 4 Conclusions and suggestions for next steps

### *Conclusions*

- 4.1 We accrued evidence that all local authorities in Wales have a process for allocating disabled people to accessible housing. Fourteen local authorities told us that there is an Accessible Housing Register in the local authority area, whereas eight local authorities told us that: their process has some elements of an Accessible Housing Register; they are in the process of developing an Accessible Housing Register; or they have their own matching process.
- 4.2 There was extensive variation between all of the Accessible Housing Registers and how they operated, as well as differences between matching systems of those local authorities that do not have an Accessible Housing Register operating in the area.
- 4.3 Despite the caution warranted in generalising these findings, we accrued evidence which suggested that social landlords who use an Accessible Housing Register are more likely than those who do not use one to:
- have an effective system for identifying accessible/ adapted/ adaptable properties and ensuring they are available to those who need them than those who do not;
  - receive specialist staff training in matching people to their accessible home and feel more confidence in their ability to match people effectively;
  - consider a range of holistic needs;
  - display increased joined working with other departments and organisations.
- 4.4 We acknowledge the concerns expressed by some stakeholders about resources and costs but we believe there is enough evidence to suggest that Accessible Housing Registers that incorporate the three key elements of: (i) applicants, (ii) property referral and (iii) a matching process, can be established relatively quickly and cost effectively. There is also anecdotal evidence recorded both in both this and previous

studies (for example, Stirling, 2009) to suggest that Accessible Housing Registers are cost effective in the long term.

### ***Suggestions for next steps***<sup>52</sup>

- 4.5 The research highlighted the benefits of social landlords using an Accessible Housing Register. Therefore we have a number of suggestions.
- 4.6 We suggest that each social landlord uses one to help match accessible housing to disabled people effectively. We understand that there are resource implications in doing this. We therefore suggest that, until it is feasible for all social landlords to have an Accessible Housing Register, those not currently using one should ensure that they have:
  - (i) implemented robust ways of collecting and using outcome monitoring data;
  - (ii) put in place effective identifications and matching systems to match disabled people with accessible homes;
  - (iii) offer comprehensive staff training to those working on the front line;
  - (iv) consider the housing needs of disabled people holistically;
  - (v) engage in joint working with a wide range of other departments and organisations.
- 4.7 We suggest that the definition of an Accessible Housing Register and the Welsh Government's policy on encouraging their use is promoted widely to social landlords. This includes the promotion of Accessible Housing Registers to de minimis landlords.
- 4.8 There is extensive experience regarding the implementation and running of Accessible Housing Registers in Wales, negating the need for any social landlord to start from scratch or pilot any scheme they were intending to initiate. There are organisations with expertise in this field who could offer advice to social landlords in the early stages of developing a register.
- 4.9 We suggest that, ideally, eligible applicants should be recorded on both a stand-alone Accessible Housing Register and the local authority's Common Housing Register (or whatever policy or procedure the social landlord has in place) in parallel so that

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<sup>52</sup> We undertook consultation with two social landlords regarding the proposed recommendations to check that our proposals were feasible.

disabled people can be considered for any accessible home or void property that could be adapted to their needs<sup>53</sup>.

- 4.10 As accessible housing is a specialist field, there should remain a separate list in order to match applicants to properties effectively. Allowing applicants to be on both the standalone list and Common Housing Register (or whatever local policy is in place) would provide both choice and access to specialist expertise. There is evidence of success when registers are operated this way and closer linking in with established schemes would help to ensure that registers are run effectively.
- 4.11 The aim should be to work towards a regional register that crosses local authority boundaries and links smaller landlords with larger social landlords to facilitate a more comprehensive register. This will help give disabled people more choice and mobility across Wales. The Welsh Government is currently promoting regional working.
- 4.12 Each register would be centrally managed by project workers with specific expertise and would link up with each of the other registers in order to compile a national register and share good practice.

### ***Suggestions for social landlords***

- 4.13 We suggest that social landlords who are looking to effectively match disabled people with accessible homes continue to ensure that they include the following in their practice:
- 4.14 We suggest that information about Accessible Housing Registers is widely and easily available in order to boost housing choices for disabled people. This includes ensuring that advertising and communication are accessible to all.
- 4.15 We suggest that staff dealing with Accessible Housing Registers should receive specific training on the needs of disabled people and how properties can be adapted as this is viewed as specialist work. We recommend that user involvement in service delivery and performance monitoring is strengthened in practice. One possibility is to include disabled people using their experiences in the training of housing staff who are responsible for Accessible Housing Registers.

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<sup>53</sup> Subject to the renovation being financially viable.

- 4.16 We suggest that all social landlords adopt the Social Model of Disability within the organisation and ensure staff receive appropriate training.
- 4.17 We suggest that all frontline staff are able to signpost applicants to dedicated project staff dealing with an Accessible Housing Register in the area.
- 4.18 We suggest that all social landlords and departments work effectively in partnership to achieve positive outcomes in matching disabled people to accessible housing. Examples of departments that social landlords should work with include: Social Services, Adult and Child Services, Homelessness and Housing Options, Occupational Therapists and Health.
- 4.19 Due to the complexities of housing disabled people, we suggest that social landlords should consider separate void targets for adapted homes. They may also like to consider extending the timescale and/or number of properties disabled people can turn down before they are penalised if they do not feel the home would fully meet their needs.
- 4.20 The evidence in the current research suggested that social landlords differ in their interpretation of what constitutes an Accessible Housing Register. The myriad different matching systems across Wales, each unique, and the fact that these matching systems are constantly evolving, means that quantifying exactly how many of these matching systems meet the criteria of an Accessible Housing Register (as detailed in 'A Perfect Match') difficult.
- 4.21 We recommend therefore that social landlords ensure that they are familiar with the definition of an Accessible Housing Register and that their matching system closely follows this definition if they are to state that they use an Accessible Housing Register.
- 4.22 In addition, due to the evolving nature of the matching systems, the information in this report is unlikely to remain up-to-date long-term. Therefore, social landlords should continue to communicate with each other to ensure that they are aware of what matching systems are operating locally and ensuring that good practice can be shared both within and between local authorities.
- 4.23 We suggest that social landlords develop stronger and more consistent monitoring of the outcomes of the Accessible Housing

Registers. Social landlords need to undertake ongoing evaluations to illustrate the cost benefits to other budgets and to the health and well-being of disabled people.

- 4.24 We suggest that cross-boundary mapping of resources should be implemented and models of practice should be shared across local authorities to ensure choice for disabled people. This happens in some local authorities but it is not consistent across all authorities in Wales. The sharing of models of practice across boundaries is an excellent way to share knowledge and expertise and resources.
- 4.25 We recommend that social landlords consider policy and practice regarding under-occupancy particularly in light of welfare reform impact and the provision of adapted and/or accessible stock.
- 4.26 Although we understand that each Accessible Housing Register needs to take account of a region's local context and resources, we suggest that, as far as possible, a uniform standard is ensured when assessing eligibility across the local authorities. For example, ensuring that a person assessed as eligible in one local authority would also be assessed as eligible in another local authority. To achieve this, social landlords could look at the categorisation work undertaken in the London Accessible Housing Register to develop common categorisation of adapted properties across social landlord and local authority boundaries.
- 4.27 We suggest that the suitability of stock is mapped, including unoccupied adapted housing in the medium to long-term future.
- 4.28 We suggest that social landlords ensure any strategy dealing with adapted or accessible housing links in to the local authority's homelessness strategy as people who cannot find or sustain accessible accommodation might be at risk of becoming homeless.

### ***Suggestions for the Welsh Government***

- 4.29 We recommend that the Welsh Government continues to encourage the use of Accessible Housing Registers and ensures their effective operation. Encouraging cross-boundary work will help to make best use of existing resources and promote consistency, efficiency and cost-effectiveness. This also includes encouraging strong leadership across the sector to support the development of new skills and understanding.

- 4.30 We recommend that the Welsh Government encourages social landlords to work with the private rented sector to expand the adapted stock levels available to people. This is especially pertinent to increase stock in areas of Wales with high demand.
- 4.31 We recommend specific work to raise awareness of disability and adapted properties with private sector landlords.
- 4.32 We also recommend the establishment of a pilot scheme in the private rented sector through a social lettings agency, but this needs to be accompanied by a commitment to overcome the barriers associated with the private rented sector. Such a pilot scheme would need to be fully evaluated and its effectiveness established before being extended across the private rented sector.

## **Appendices:**

### ***1. Details of the matching systems operating in the 22 local authorities***

In this section, we detail the matching systems that are operating in the 22 local authorities in Wales.

The information documented here takes a broad local authority approach to what matching systems are operating in the area although even if an Accessible Housing Register is operating in an authority, there are no guarantees that every Registered Social Landlord (or de minimis landlord) in the area is or will use it.

In addition, because not every social landlord in Wales engaged with the study, we are unable to confirm whether all Registered Social Landlords are operating an Accessible Housing Register within their own housing stock.

Given this, where possible, we have documented whether there is an Accessible Housing Register in the local authority area and which social landlords are accessing that register.

More detailed case study examples of how individual social landlords approach the process of matching disabled people with accessible accommodation are documented at Appendix 2.

These include:

- (i) Bron Afon (Torfaen), currently in the process of developing an Accessible Homes Service;
- (ii) a de minimis landlord who does not use an Accessible Housing Register;
- (iii) Vale of Glamorgan Council that recently (2011) set up an Accessible Housing Register;
- (iv) Bridgend Council
- (v) the North Wales Single Access Route to Housing that is currently being developed across North Wales local authorities.

Given the variety of social landlords' approaches to matching disabled people to accessible homes, these case studies give a range of the types of processes and systems that are operating in Wales at present.

## Blaenau Gwent

The local authority operates a Common Housing Register and the council's stock was transferred to Tai Calon Community Housing in July 2010. Other housing providers in the area are Linc Cymru, United Welsh and Melin Homes.

We were told during the research that there is no Accessible Housing Register in the authority but they do have a discretionary grant scheme to assist people to stay in their homes where adaptations are required. A representative from the local authority told us that, even though they do not operate an Accessible Housing Register, they do work very closely with their Occupational Health Department - and with the registered social landlords operating in the borough - to identify suitable people for adapted properties.

The procedure to match disabled people to accessible properties involves working with an Occupational Therapist to assess and allocate a suitable property.

## Bridgend

Bridgend is currently developing a Common Housing Register. There is an Accessible Housing Register in the authority area that is run by Valleys to Coast and all local registered social landlords are able to access it.

The social landlords that can access the register are Linc Cymru, Hafod Housing Association, Bridgend County Borough Council, Valleys to Coast and Wales and West. However, Bridgend are in a period of considerable change when it comes to how the register is operated.

## Caerphilly

Caerphilly has a Common Housing Register and an Adapted Properties Register that is used to categorise vacant properties.

A survey respondent told us that their Accessible Housing Register is a stand-alone register established in 2004. Applicants with physical or mental health issues can apply by completing a housing needs form.

Their application is referred to an Occupational Therapist, who works for the Private Sector Housing Section Adaptations team and is responsible for advising on accessible housing.



## Cardiff

Cardiff has a Common Housing Register and an Accessible Housing Register (Cardiff Accessible Homes) that is managed as part of the Common Housing Register.

The list is managed by the local authority and all registered social landlords in the area are able to access it. Registered social landlords in the area are Cadwyn, Cardiff Community Housing Association, Hafod Housing Association, Linc Cymru, United Welsh, Taff Housing and Wales and West.

The Accessible Housing Register involves a register of adapted and accessible properties in Cardiff and they manage a process that matches available properties to those applicants on the accessible housing waiting list.

## Carmarthenshire

Carmarthenshire Council operates a 'Housing Choice Register' with its partner housing associations Bro Myrddin Housing Association, Coastal Housing Association, Cymdeithas Tai Cantref, Family Housing Association and Gwalia Housing Group.

We were told by a local authority representative that they now have an Accessible Housing Register that has been up and running since 2012.

A survey respondent (Organisation: Cantref) stated that, in Carmarthenshire, specific needs are measured via medical information from a doctor or professional person stating the type of property required for the applicant.

## Ceredigion

Ceredigion runs a Common Housing Register and the Accessible Housing Register is managed as part of this.

Ceredigion Housing runs both the Common Housing Register and the Accessible Housing Register. Social landlords that can access the register are Mid Wales Housing, Tai Ceredigion, Family Housing and Cymdeithais Tai Cantref.

A survey respondent (Organisation: Cantref) stated that in Ceredigion, individuals' specific needs are assessed via a medical questionnaire which is then assessed by the Occupational Therapist to determine if an adapted property is required.

## Conwy

As a stock transfer authority, Conwy no longer has council housing, but there are currently five registered social landlords with housing stock in the county: Cartrefi Conwy, Cymdeithas Tai Conwy, North Wales Housing, Wales and West and Clwyd Alyn Housing Association.

Each housing association has its own allocation policy and points scheme to enable it to allocate properties as they become empty. Allocations to Cartrefi Conwy's properties are made from a joint Conwy Council / Cartrefi Conwy waiting list, which Cartrefi Conwy maintains on behalf of itself and the council.

An 'Adapted Property Matching Service' exists to ensure that adapted properties are promptly given to relevant persons - i.e. disabled people apply as normal to the housing waiting list and are assessed for adaptation need via the main waiting list.

A frontline survey respondent from the area indicated that they use an Accessible Housing Register (called here 'The Adapted Property Matching Service') (Organisation: Conwy Borough County Council).

They told us that, if applicants are having difficulty getting around their home, they can contact their Customer Care Service, who will ask them particular questions and refer them for a visit by an Occupational Therapist.

If the Occupational Therapist decides that the home cannot be adapted, they will make a referral to the Adapted Property Matching Service.

## Denbighshire

There is no Common Housing Register in Denbighshire, but a survey respondent (Organisation: Denbighshire County Council) told us that they do have a system of matching people who need adapted homes to suitably adapted properties when they become available.

They have a Specialist Housing Panel that meets six-weekly to discuss individual cases that require adapted properties. To be brought to the panel, the applicant has to have had an Occupational Therapist assessment and the report from the Occupational Therapist is discussed at the panel. Applicants are matched by the panel to available properties.

The panel comprises an Occupational Therapist, a Social Worker and the Allocations Officer. Their maintenance department holds a list of all properties that have had adaptations and once they are aware that a property

will be coming available, it is ring-fenced for the Specialist Housing Panel to allocate.

The registered social landlords that are linked in to this process are Clwyd Alyn, Tai Clwyd, Wales and West and Denbighshire Housing.

## Flintshire

Flintshire Council have their own housing policy and stock, as do Clwyd Alyn, Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd and Wales and West Housing Associations. A social landlord survey respondent indicated that they were linked in to a local Accessible Housing Register.

Flintshire County Council told us that their register was established in 2012 and is incorporated into the Common Housing Register. The respondent told us that the local authority has a database with the details of every adaptation it has installed.

## Gwynedd

Gwynedd runs a Common Housing Register and they have an Accessible Housing Register that is managed as part of this.

Each registered social landlord informs the local authority when an adapted property becomes available and they match a tenant to that property based on need.

The process is run by Housing Options and registered social landlords that are linked in to the register are Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd, Cymdeithas Tai Eryri, North Wales Housing Association and Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd. Wales and West has a few homes outside the common waiting list scheme.

## Isle of Anglesey

The partner organisations in the area (North Wales Housing Association, Cymdeithas Tai Eryri and Clwyd Alyn Housing Association) share a Common Housing Register with the authority.

There does not appear to be an Accessible Housing Register. Rather, matching occurs through the Common Housing Register. Disabled people are identified through the application form and then referred to the Housing Link Panel.

Applicants requiring an adapted property are asked to complete a Housing Register Application form and a Special Needs Housing Questionnaire.

Their application is assessed by the Housing Link Panel, which comprises Housing Officers and Occupational Therapists. The team then matches a property to the applicant's needs.

### Merthyr Tydfil

There is a Common Housing Register in Merthyr Tydfil, which operates the Managing Adaptation and Supported Accommodation scheme.

As well as providing a referral and allocation system for all locally provided supported housing and floating support services, the scheme has also developed an Accessible Housing Register that can help households with mobility problems to find appropriate housing.

### Monmouthshire

During the research, we spoke to a representative from Monmouthshire County Council and were told that they do not have a separate Accessible Housing Register.

Disabled people's housing needs are picked up via application to the Common Housing Register. Adapted properties are advertised fortnightly through one-stop shops in the county, on their website and also through direct contact with vulnerable applicants.

A survey respondent from Monmouthshire (Organisation: Monmouthshire County Council) told us that they even though they do not operate an Accessible Housing Register, they do have a system of categorising accessible housing for advertising through choice-based lettings.

However, a social landlord survey respondent (organisation: Monmouthshire Housing Association) indicated that they were in the process of developing an 'Adapted Property Register'.

This will require visiting all properties that they consider to be suitable for disabled applicants (and to what extent) and identifying properties where they have undertaken an adaptation. It is then the intention to try to match new tenants to disabled or adapted properties more effectively.

### Neath Port Talbot

Neath Port Talbot is a stock transfer authority whose stock was transferred to NPT Homes. Other organisations working in the area include Coastal, Gwalia, Linc, Family Housing, and Newydd.

There is no Common Housing Register. Applications requiring adapted properties are managed through the Choice Based Lettings system. Applicants for both general needs and adapted homes are on the list and are sent a monthly bulletin detailing which properties are available in the area.

The applicant can then 'bid' for the property of their choice. All descriptions include details of any adaptations that have been made and the applicant can therefore bid on a property that meets their needs.

We were advised that in 2007 the Partnership in Accessibility, New Opportunities project was set up. This was a three-year project that examined the feasibility of a Common Housing Register, an Affordable Housing Register and an Accessible Housing Register.

Partners of the Partnership project included:

- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
- Coastal Housing Group
- Tai Cymdogaeth (Grŵp Gwalia)
- Linc-Cymru
- Newydd Housing Association

However, a representative from Neath Port Talbot Council confirmed that after the project, the registers were not implemented, but they added that they do have a joint housing register with NPT homes.

## Newport

Home Options Newport is the name of the Common Housing Register in Newport. This is a partnership between Newport City Council, Newport City Homes, Charter Housing, Seren Living, Newport Housing Trust, Melin Homes, Linc Cymru, Elim, Hafod, Aelwyd and United Welsh Housing Associations.

During our survey of social landlords at the strategic level, Newport City told us that an Accessible Housing Register was introduced during 2012 and is incorporated into the Common Housing Register and choice-based letting scheme.

However, a social landlord survey respondent (Organisation: Newport Homes) told us that they do not use an Accessible Housing Register. They stated that their matching system involves the 'Homes by Choice' system so a disabled person can bid for an adapted property within the area they wish to live.

They told us that they are already aware, when properties become available, whether or not they are adapted and accessible without the use of an Accessible Housing Register. Their matching system involves referral to

Occupational Therapists, who assess the requirements of the tenants and then advise the organisation of what they need to do to meet those needs.

Previously, Newport had the East Wales Accessible Housing Project (hosted by Charter Housing) which was preceded by Space for People Disabled Persons' Housing Service (Stirling, 2009).

## Pembrokeshire

Pembrokeshire runs a Common Housing Register named 'Choice Homes'. An Accessible Housing Register is managed as part of the Common Housing Register and incorporated into a choice-based lettings scheme.

The Accessible Housing Register was established in 2004 and is a joint register held by partnering social landlords in Pembrokeshire.

## Powys

Powys does not have an Accessible Housing Register per se, but there are elements of one in the 'Disabled Person's List'.

According to the local authority's policy, there are three lists: Older Persons' list, Disabled Persons' list and General Persons' list. All properties designated as suitable for disabled persons will be allocated to persons from the Disabled Persons list.

Applicants from this list can also be considered for non-designated properties if they wish. Where the local authority is unable to allocate properties designated as suitable for occupation by disabled persons to those on the Disabled Persons list, consideration will be given to applicants from the Older Persons' and General Persons' lists.

They have details of properties with major adaptations but no overall Accessible Housing Register. During the research a representative from Powys County Council told us that they have been meaning to develop an Accessible Housing Register for some time. At present when an adapted property becomes empty, they contact Social Services.

## Rhondda Cynon Taff

Rhondda Cynon Taff operates a Common Housing Register and the Accessible Housing Register, named Pathways to Housing, is part of this.

The local authority Housing Options team manages the list and matches tenants to properties as they become available, dependent on need. Registered social landlords linked in to the Common Housing Register are

Cynon Taf Community Housing Group, Hafod Housing Association, Newydd, RCT Homes, Rhondda Housing and Wales and West.

However, a representative from the local authority told us that the Accessible Housing Register is going through considerable change in that they used to operate a stand-alone Accessible Housing Register. They are now in the process of incorporating the Accessible Housing Register into the Common Housing Register.

## Swansea

Swansea Council has an Accessible Housing Register, which it runs in partnership with local housing associations Family Housing, Coastal Housing and Tai Cymdogaeth (Grwp Gwalia).

The ADAPT scheme is informed when any socially rented adapted accommodation becomes available in the Swansea area. It then matches it with applicants on its lists. People requiring adapted properties make a housing application to the authority or a partner association, who refer it to ADAPT as opposed to the Common Waiting List.

## Torfaen

Torfaen is a 'stock transfer' authority, which transferred its stock to Bron Afon in 2008. Torfaen has a Common Housing Register known as 'Homeseeker.' The housing providers taking part are Torfaen County Borough Council, Bron Afon Community Housing, Linc Cymru, Hafod Housing Association, Melin Homes and Charter Housing Association<sup>54</sup>

A survey respondent from Torfaen (Organisation: Torfaen) told us that even though they do not have an Accessible Housing Register, they do have a system of categorising accessible housing for advertising through choice-based lettings. They told us that properties are advertised with any adaptations made to the property detailed.

Bron Afon is also piloting an Accessible Homes Service which will follow the principles of an Accessible Housing Register.

## Vale of Glamorgan

The Vale of Glamorgan Council allocates its accommodation using 'Homes4U', which is agreed between the Council, Newydd Housing Association, Wales and West Housing Association, Hafod Housing Association and United Welsh Housing Association.

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<sup>54</sup> Accessed June 2013: <http://www.torfaenhomeseker.org.uk/Data/Pub/StreamTemp/sdpha3bz.pdf>

The Vale of Glamorgan set up an Accessible Housing Register in 2011. It is run in conjunction with their Common Housing Register and is incorporated into a choice-based letting scheme.

## Wrexham

There is no Common Housing Register in Wrexham. We were told by the local authority that they have the foundations of an Accessible Housing Register. They have a list of properties that are adapted / accessible and a list of people who require adapted / accessible housing (this was being developed in 2012).

At present though, they do not have a definitive system to match people to properties. It is done manually (with reported success), but the hope for the future is to combine these elements into an integrated system that can efficiently match people to an accessible home. At present, when adapted properties become available they are matched to the needs of the applicant.

## The North Wales Project: a single access route for housing – in development

We spoke to the project manager for the development of the 'Single Access Route to Housing' in North Wales. This is a project between nine partners: Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire Councils plus Wales and West, Clwyd Alyn, Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd, North Wales Housing and Cartrefi Conwy.

The aim of the project is to develop a single access route for people looking for affordable housing in north-east Wales. There will be a common register, a common allocations policy and a common approach to Housing Options advice, including accessible housing. A representative from Denbighshire Council told us that, under the North Wales Single Access Route to Housing project, Accessible Housing Registers will be held by each authority involved.

It is important to note, however, the comments of a social landlord in north Wales that operates across more than one local authority area, who does not think that their organisation should use an Accessible Housing Register in the future.

They say that their existing system includes and identifies disabled people so that they can be considered for any void property that may be adapted according to their needs.

They feel that if disabled people were on a separate register to match adapted properties, they would be waiting much longer as they very rarely become



vacant. This would mean that the disabled person would miss out on standard properties that could be adapted according to their needs.

They also advised that they already have a list of adapted/accessible properties, a list of people who need adapted/accessible properties and a formal process of matching people with properties without it being defined as an official Accessible Housing Register.

## **2. Case study examples of how social landlords approach the process of matching disabled people with accessible accommodation in Wales**

### **Bron Afon, Torfaen**

Bron Afon does not have an Accessible Housing Register at present, but they are piloting an Accessible Homes Service.

A Common Housing Register operates in Torfaen where new applicants and tenants making transfer applications indicate a medical need to the council's Homeseeker team (who manage the register on behalf of partners).

Homeseeker then make a referral to the Occupational Therapists for assessment, which triggers advice and support and, where it is deemed appropriate, additional priority for re-housing. Direct matching takes place where household needs are complex and availability of appropriate accommodation is scarce.

Bron Afon has a team of in-house Occupational Therapists and an adaptations budget which is helping them to significantly improve access to their homes. Their housing officers routinely refer on to their in-house Occupational Therapists when they identify existing tenants with a need for adaptations.

They use void surveys, asset management property records, and stock condition data to capture relevant information on adapted properties.

They have committed, with their Choice Based Lettings partners, to improve the awareness, use of and access to adapted and accessible housing in the Borough. They are also working to classify the accessibility of all of their homes as a first step in establishing an Accessible Housing Register / applying Accessible Housing Register principles to the operation of the Choice Based Letting Scheme.

This is reflected in the Homeseeker partnership business plan along with the development of an improved housing options and solutions service. They are in the process of classifying the level of accessibility of their homes but have not prescribed whether the output of this work will be a free-standing Accessible Housing Register or an enhanced Choice Based Letting scheme.

### **A brief case example from a de minimis landlord**

This landlord explained to us that they do not have an Accessible Housing Register and feel that they do not need one due to the low number of stock they have (12 properties).

They told us that if one of their tenants required adaptations then they would assess them on an individual basis and undertake the required adaptation. They would work with Social Services and Hospital Discharge to assess a tenant's needs if necessary. They told us that their monitoring process is constantly under review and they have a 'gold star' audit every three years by external auditors.

## Vale of Glamorgan

The Vale of Glamorgan recently set up a register (2011). Their accessible register is in conjunction with their Common Housing Register, and is incorporated into a Choice-based Letting scheme.

To identify relevant information on adapted properties they use a system called Anite, but they are also developing an Asset Management database called 'Keystone'. In addition, they are surveying all of the housing stock.

All adaptations are recorded via the inspection process by housing officers at the pre- termination stage and again by the void officers following termination of a tenancy. The identified properties are then cross referenced with the Accessible Housing Register prior to advert.

Their register is open to the public and they have incorporated the Accessible Housing Register in to the HOMES4U scheme which is advertised in the local media.

Applicants are monitored as part of their existing equality monitoring via HOMES4U. Success is also monitored by the reduction in terminations due to properties being unsuitable. The monitoring role is used to fully appraise the scheme and ensure that it is fit for purpose. There was a review of the HOMES4U policy in September 2012 where more integration of the Accessible Housing Register was included in the policy.

It was reported that the Accessible Housing Register has led to savings as adaptations are more effectively managed than before the register. Savings have also been made through a more effective means of allocating which can result in less time being spent in hospital or respite care.

The Vale of Glamorgan now finds it easier to assist disabled people who are looking to transfer or downsize their accommodation. This is because the scheme runs in conjunction with their allocation system so they are aware of cases much earlier. They also manage an 'incentive to move' scheme which will financially assist people to downsize into more suitable accommodation and assist with removals.

## Local authorities that have changed their approach to Accessible Housing Registers to suit the local context

RCT Homes operated a stand-alone Accessible Housing Register that they thought was not effective. They now plan to incorporate this into their Common Housing Register.

Bridgend local authority is also in the process of changing their system and below we detail their plans.

Their current service is called Bridgend Accessible Homes. It is hosted by Valleys2Coast Housing Association and managed by a steering group. Bridgend Accessible Homes has existed for around four years and was set up so that registered social landlords that had a void adapted home would pass it on to Bridgend Accessible Homes who would then allocate it to a disabled tenant.

It was originally set up for existing social tenants but as availability grew it was extended to owner occupiers, social tenants and the private sector. However, they found that people had been on the Accessible Housing Register for over three years and their details were not updated.

The process was that a person would apply to Bridgend Accessible Homes who would pass the application on to an Occupational Therapist who would do an assessment. However, these assessments could quickly become out of date and applicants were allocated homes on the basis of out of date assessments. Also, the list got so big and open to all that they faced resource issues.

Bridgend also told us that the original system led to duplication. Bridgend Accessible Homes would accept an application then send it to the Occupational Therapist (who worked for Social Services) and who would duplicate the assessment process.

Under the new system it has been agreed by the Steering Group that the service is to be delivered by Bridgend County Borough Council as part of the proposed Common Housing Register and the front end assessment is being removed to be done by an Occupational Therapist only.

Bridgend Council now deals directly with applications. Applicants complete a Common Housing Registration form and their needs are assessed via this form and if an adapted home is required it is directed to an Occupational Therapist.

The local authority does the housing assessment and the Occupational Therapist does a personal assessment. These assessments are then combined to identify a suitable property for the applicant.

Under the new system the local authority is going to introduce trigger points in the process of new allocations so that applicants are put into bands (for example, a priority band, band A, band B etc). If an applicant has been a priority for a while it will mean they are urgently in need of a home. The council will work with registered social landlords to provide additional adaptations.

Under the Bridgend Accessible Homes system people were not given any other housing advice. By the process being integrated into the new common housing system there will be a full interview to assess wider housing needs.

### The North Wales Project – a single access route for housing

We spoke to the project manager for the development of the 'Single Access Route to Housing' in north Wales. This is a partnership between Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire councils, Wales and West, Clwyd Alyn, Cwmdeithas Tai Clwyd, North Wales Housing and Cartrefi Conwy.

The project aims to develop a single access route for people looking for affordable housing in north-east Wales. There will be a common register, common allocations policy and a common approach to housing options advice including accessible housing. The Welsh Government is funding the Common Housing Register through what was the Social Housing Management Grant.

The service is due to start at the beginning of 2014. The advice aspect will be in relation to not just social housing but also other options, for example, the private sector.

Currently each partner has its own register and allocations policy including on the issue of accessible housing. Although there is joint working regarding accessible housing, each partner does have issues with provision so the project aims to overcome these to provide a better service and help tenants and landlords across local authority boundaries.

The project aims to be citizen-centred:

*"It's already clear that awareness raising and training is implemented on the ground and also, as much as possible, to bring in disabled people and organisations in to development and delivery." (Project Manager).*

There have been barriers identified such as the initial set-up costs, local variations in the market and demographics and the difficulty of getting all of the partners to agree.

The project also aims to fully take into account various factors such as access to shopping, facilities, support services etc. for tenants and also to inform work with private sector to release properties of the right type in the right area so that they can develop initiatives across all sectors.

### ***3. Case Studies of disabled people housed via various social landlord matching schemes (provided by the social landlords)***

#### **Case Study A**

A couple with one adult daughter were living in a standard two bedroom house, mid link, with no adaptations. All family members were disabled. They applied for housing through the register in November 2010 and the family was identified for a new build property through Social Housing Grant funding.

However, a change in circumstances in March 2012 meant that the family could not wait for a new build as the father was unable to be discharged from hospital to their accommodation. The family was housed into a four bed house in June 2012. The property had level access, wider doors in the extension and the scheme arranged for internal doors to be widened.

This was a good example of where the project tried to plan for a family through Social Housing Grant but had to react to a change in circumstances and find accommodation immediately to avoid costs to the NHS service and provide a better quality of life for the family.

#### **Case Study B**

An applicant registered for re-housing in July 2010 and was awarded urgent medical priority in April 2011 on receipt of an Occupational Therapist report and medical letters.

The applicant was active with bidding for properties but was not successful in finding anything which met both his and his family's needs. The applicant lived with his 20 year old daughter.

As part of the scheme, reviews are carried out with applicants who have not been seen by an Occupational Therapist for 12 months or more. In October 2012 a home visit was carried out to review both the applicant and his daughter's needs with regards to re-housing.

The urgency of need became clear from the home visit with regards to access to the property, internal stairs and general lack of wheelchair circulation space within the property.

Since the previous Occupational Therapist assessment, the applicant now had his one year old grand-daughter living with them. The review recommended a three bedroom ground floor property suitable for full wheelchair access in order to meet the family's current and long term needs.

Unfortunately, fully wheelchair accessible properties are difficult to locate, and particularly a three bed property in the area they wished to live.

As part of the scheme, the Occupational Therapist works with Community Housing and Voids departments to ensure that any potentially wheelchair accessible properties are highlighted when they become available.

Having being notified of a two bedroom wheelchair accessible bungalow, a site visit was carried out with the Adaptations Surveyor to assess its suitability for the family. The Occupational Therapist proposed, having looked at the floor plan, that a rear extension was provided to create a third bedroom.

During the on-site visit, the surveyor advised that this seemed a reasonable proposal and could not foresee any obvious problems with obtaining planning permission.

The proposal was explained to the family and viewing arranged to establish whether they would be interested. It was advised that nothing could be agreed until a request had been made to the Community Housing Department.

The proposal was for the family to move into the property as it was whilst planning permission was sought. Although this would mean mother and daughter would have to share a double bedroom, it would provide them with a more suitable environment than their current property, and prevent the property from remaining void.

It was advised that there was no guarantee as to whether planning permission would be granted and it may have resulted in seeking re-housing again if it was turned down.

The family viewed the property and was very interested in the proposal. They accepted the conditions associated with the move, and agreed that even in its current state it was far more suitable than their current property. It was agreed to put forward a request for direct matching. If this was agreed then Adaptations would take the case forward and seek planning permission and arrange work required.



#### **4. Stakeholders engaged in the research**

##### **Strategic Survey Respondents (41)**

ADAPT Swansea

Bron Afon

Caerphilly County Borough Council

Cardiff County Borough Council

Cartrefi Gwynedd

Charter Housing

Clwyd Alyn Housing Association

Community Housing

Cymdeithas Tai Eryri

De Minimis Landlord (3 different respondents)

Denbighshire County council

Family Housing Association

First Choice Housing Association (2 different respondents)

Flintshire County Borough Council (2 different respondents)

Gwalia Group

Habinteg

Hafod Housing Association

Melin Homes

Merthyr Housing Association

Monmouthshire County Borough Council

Monmouthshire Housing Association Ltd

Newport City Homes

Newydd Housing Association (2 different respondents)

North Wales Housing

NPT Homes

Pathways to Adapted Housing Scheme

Pembrokeshire County Borough Council (2 different respondents)

Pembrokeshire Housing

RCT Homes

Taff Housing Association

Torfaen County Borough Council

United Welsh (2 different respondents)

Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council

Valleys to Coast Housing

### **Survey Respondents at the Practitioner Level (21)**

ADAPT Swansea

Bron Afon

Cantref

Cardiff Accessible Homes

Cardiff County Borough Council

Community Housing

Conwy County Borough Council

Cynon Taf

De Minimis Landlord

Family Housing Association

First Choice Housing Association

Gwalia

LINC (2 different respondents)

Melin Homes

Merthyr Vale

North Wales Housing

Pembrokeshire Housing  
RCT Homes  
Rhondda Housing Association  
Taff Housing Association  
Torfaen County Borough Council

**South Wales Stakeholder Focus Group (15)**

ADAPT Swansea  
Bron Afon (2 different respondents)  
Caerphilly County Borough Council (2 different respondents)  
Cardiff Accessible Homes (2 different respondents)  
Carmarthenshire County Borough Council  
Charter Housing  
Newport County Borough Council  
Newport Social Services  
RCT Homes  
RNIB  
Torfaen County Borough Council  
Valleys to Coast

**Occupational Therapist Focus Group (9)**

Adaptations and Community Equipment (ACE) Team, Rhondda Cynon Taf  
Ceredigion County Borough Council (2 different respondents)  
Conwy County Borough Council  
Denbighshire County Borough Council  
Flintshire County Borough Council  
Hywell Dda Health Board

Merthyr Tydfil, Social Services

Monmouthshire County Borough Council

**North Wales Stakeholder Focus Group (10)**

Conwy County Borough Council (2 different respondents)

Conwy County Borough – service user

Denbighshire County Borough Council (3 different respondents)

Flintshire County Borough Council

Wrexham County Borough Council

**Individual in-depth interviews with stakeholders**

Bridgend County Borough Council

Chartered Institute of Housing

De Minimis Landlord

National Landlords Association

Vale of Glamorgan County Borough Council

Wales & West Housing Association

Welsh Tenants