

Councillor Peter Black
Convener – Adult Services Scrutiny Panel

BY EMAIL

Please ask for: Councillor Andrea Lewis
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Our Ref: AL/KH
Your Ref:
Date: 29 July 2019

Dear Councillor Black

Thank you for your letter dated 8th July 2019 requesting my comments and response to the matters raised from the Adult Services Scrutiny Performance panel of the 20th June regarding the Wales Audit Office Report on Housing Adaptations.

Just to clarify, the Occupational Therapy (OT) service has not been 'brought in-house' as such. The Housing Renewals and Adaptations service has however employed its own OTs dedicated to Adaptations to ensure sufficient resources are in place to provide recommendations specifically for the purposes of housing adaptations within the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and Council House Adaptations programmes. Social Services OTs continue to provide assessments for disabled adaptations but the arrangement with Housing now having dedicated OT resource means Social services are also able to continue to complete various other assessments not linked to adaptations. There is no duplication between Housing Social Services OTs and Social Services OTs on the services they provide. Both Housing OTs and Social Services OTs undertake the same assessment protocols for the purpose of providing Disabled Adaptations recommendations that follow set procedures / professional guidelines.

With regard the panel expecting the waiting times for adaptations to Council Housing to be less than private sector housing, we advise that other than some minor exceptions, the application and delivery processes for DFGs and Council House adaptations are designed to be as close as possible to one another and both follow the same fundamental principles. Continual improvement is strived for of course and the overall aim is to promote equity in terms of waiting times. However this cannot be guaranteed in every case. DFGs and Council House adaptations are required to be monitored separately for reporting purposes. Each case is tracked from initial enquiry through to completion and several hundred are processed every year. This means waiting times can and do fluctuate between tenures depending on the number, nature and complexity of the adaptation applications received by the Council in any one year. Whilst every effort is made to ensure the experience and waiting times for customers is the same regardless of tenure, complete equity of waiting time will rarely if ever be achieved in reality. In 2018/19 however the average waiting times for all cases were within 17 days of each other.

The waiting times for both DFGs and Council House adaptations in Swansea have reduced year on year. The service will continue efforts to look at ways of reducing timescales for application and delivery processes to try and achieve, and then surpass, the national average waiting time for all tenures. These efforts will include working with the Council's Building Services teams and external contractors from our framework to deliver schemes more effectively including fast tracking administration of schemes to get jobs started sooner, looking at levels of resources employed to deliver schemes and response times to certify completion of works.

The service eagerly awaits guidance from the Welsh Government National Adaptations steering group on unified adaptations processes, application paperwork and sharing of resources between all public bodies delivering adaptations. We will also be keen to support proposals for Regional Programme Boards to take the lead on improving the strategic focus of adaptations locally and regionally.

I trust this is of use. Please contact me if you require further information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrea Lewis". The ink is grey and the signature is written on a white background.

COUNCILLOR ANDREA LEWIS
CABINET MEMBER FOR HOMES & ENERGY